

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT

### **Board of Forestry Letter**

The Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed the draft letter to the California Board of Forestry (Agenda Item E.1, Attachment 1). Some suggested changes to make the letter more timely have been highlighted in the attached version. The HC recommends the Council approve and send the revised letter to the Board of Forestry.

### **Bureau of Reclamation Letter**

The HC reviewed the draft letter to the Bureau of Reclamation (Agenda Item E.1, Attachment 2) and made a minor change that is highlighted in the attached version. The HC recommends the Council approve and send the revised letter to the Bureau of Reclamation.

### **Queets/Strait of Juan De Fuca Coho Overfishing Report**

The HC is still waiting on direction from the Salmon Technical Team as to how we can contribute to this process.

### **Report on Deep Sea Coral Research**

The HC received a presentation from Dr. Tom Hourigan of NMFS' Office of Habitat Conservation on NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program (DSCRTP). The Program has been active in the South Atlantic region, and beginning in FY 2010 will begin a three-year research program on the West Coast, with an initial meeting planned for January in Portland to identify priorities. Recent changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act have allowed discretionary authority by fishery management councils to protect deep sea corals and sponges. Dr. Hourigan solicited involvement in the process by Council staff and the Habitat Committee for the following reasons:

- To inform the five-year essential fish habitat (EFH) review
- To describe deep-sea coral locations for potential discretionary deep sea coral zones
- To address petitions for conservation
- To contribute to Sanctuary planning
- Because the Pacific region contains extensive gorgonian and black coral resources

The HC also notes that the information gathered by the DSCRTP would better inform the ecosystem fishery management plan process.

### **Update on Central Valley Biological Opinion**

The HC received an update on the Central Valley Biological Opinion. Within the last two months, the five-agency team has met twice. NMFS has reminded the BOR of its obligations regarding EFH, and has made BOR aware that a letter regarding outstanding issues may be coming from the Council. Although BOR has not yet responded to NMFS' EFH conservation recommendations, they have begun implementing the reasonable and prudent alternatives (RPAs).

A draft Trinity River Division (TRD) Biological Opinion was submitted to the Center for Independent Experts for peer review, and NMFS is currently considering and integrating their comments. The revised draft is expected to be available for public review in early 2010.

### **National Fish Habitat Action Plan**

The HC received a briefing on the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP). In part modeled after the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the NFHAP would establish regional partnerships and leverage project funding for fish habitat conservation. Legislation has been introduced that would provide \$75 million annually to fund this endeavor.

Startup funding for a west coast FHAP for marine and estuarine habitats has been supplied by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with support from NMFS. Fran Recht of PSMFC is the designated staff to convene an initial meeting of regional partners and to develop regional priorities for marine and estuarine habitats.

Because of the overlap with Council-managed species and the update of salmon EFH and the ecosystem-based management plan development process, it would be helpful to have Council staff track this effort.

PFMC  
10/31/09