

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
UPDATE AND FURTHER REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MARINE  
PROTECTED AREAS

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was briefed by Mr. Kerry Griffin regarding the White Paper on the National System of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The SSC commends Council staff for preparing the document, which clarifies many of the questions regarding the National System raised by the Council and SSC at the September 2009 meeting.

The SSC concurs with the White Paper that the 52 sites the Council has been asked to nominate for inclusion in the System meet the criteria for inclusion specified by the MPA Center. The SSC notes that comprehensive mapping of MPAs (as intended by the National System) could serve a variety of research, data, and management needs.

While potential benefits may be gained from having a comprehensive inventory of MPA sites, the scientific value of imposing a formal process for nominating/removing MPAs from the National System and some of the requirements of that process remain unclear. For instance, according to the White Paper (Attachment 2, p. 6), "In general, the Directive gives the managing entity and Fishery Management Councils (FMCs) complete latitude to add, remove, or modify an MPA on the National System." However, according to NMFS Policy Directive 01-114 (Attachment 7, p. 6), "Upon request of the managing entity, and based upon a supporting rationale, the MPA will be removed from the List of National System MPAs." It is not clear why "supporting rationale" needs to be provided, who determines whether that rationale is adequate, or the basis (scientific or otherwise) for determining the adequacy of that rationale.

The MPA Center (Attachment 3, p. 4) has indicated "Identifying conservation gaps is a critical step toward achieving the conservation objectives of the national system. The gap analysis process will begin on the West Coast (California, Oregon, and Washington) in 2009-2010." The SSC would be interested in receiving an update on the status of the West Coast gap analysis and remains willing to review scientific aspects of that analysis.

PFMC  
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