

## GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON HABITAT MATTERS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from Ms. Arlene Merems, of the Habitat Committee, about recent activity regarding the offshore wind energy industry.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) issued a Request for Information (RFI) in April (see [Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 3, June 2013](#)). The due date for comments was May 30, 2013, but BOEM made clear it would take any comments from the Pacific Fishery Management Council under advisement.

Ms. Merems also attended a BOEM offshore energy (wind and wave) workshop in May and was advised the BOEM Oregon Intergovernmental Task Force, an intergovernmental group, has been formed and includes only federal officials and elected state, local and tribal officials or designees to address wind energy issues.

The GAP agrees with the Habitat Committee's recommendation that the Council should have a presence on the task force. The GAP further recommends the fishing industry have representation on the task force. The relatively new offshore wind and wave industry is quickly changing and will likely have long-lasting effects on established users, such as the fishing industry. It is imperative the Council have representation in future discussions about offshore ocean use.

Regarding the Request for Information, the GAP also agrees with the Habitat Committee's recommendations and the Oregon response to the RFI (see [Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 5, June 2013](#)). The issues addressed and questions asked in the Oregon letter are excellent and should serve to get the dialog started. With that in mind, the GAP requests the Council send a letter to BOEM, including the following points:

1. Endorsement of the letter from Oregon. It is important that environmental and biological studies be completed *before* any infrastructure is placed in the water. Moreover, it is imperative that socio-economic studies and determinations of the costs of displacement on existing users be taken into account prior to offshore energy development;
2. Notification of the Council's intent to exercise its authority under the Magnuson-Stevens Act regarding Essential Fish Habitat to be consulted and actively involved in any projects proposed for the outer continental shelf, including the size and location of the tracts to be leased; and
3. That the offshore renewable energy industry be held to the same standards as the fishing industry regarding seabird, marine mammal and overfished species interactions.

The GAP discussed the fact that offshore wind energy rules are in flux and that wind energy development, like wave energy, has a lot of unknowns associated with it. For example, fiscal

issues are affecting wave energy companies once thought to be leading the charge on developing this kind of renewable energy; others have failed altogether. The wind energy project proposed for 15 miles off of Coos Bay, Oregon, is dependent on the development of the Jordan Cove LNG facility, yet its construction has yet to begin and permitting has barely started. In short, there are a lot of unknowns with relation to these kinds of renewable energy industries and the Council should remain aware of the changes.

PFMC  
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