

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON CURRENT HABITAT ISSUES

### **Klamath letter**

A draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report has been released in regard to the Secretarial Determination on whether to move forward with the removal of four dams from the mainstem Klamath River. Comments are due November 21. As directed by the Council in September, the Habitat Committee (HC) has prepared a comment letter, Agenda Item G.1.a Attachment 1, for the Council's consideration.

### **Columbia letter**

The HC has submitted a supplemental letter on the Columbia River Biological Opinion for the Council's consideration (Agenda Item G.1.a, Supplemental Revised Attachment 2). We understand that the letter was unclear in regard to the role of the stakeholders, in that non-sovereign stakeholders would not have equal footing with state, tribal and Federal sovereigns. Instead, they would be collaborative partners in the development of a regionally acceptable plan.

The HC clarified these points, and made other minor changes, in the supplemental version of the letter.

### **Deep Sea Corals**

The HC received a presentation from Elizabeth Clarke, National Marine Fisheries Service/Northwest Fisheries Science Center, with an update on the Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program, and research efforts of the first two years of the three-year program. The program's primary research objectives are to: 1) understand factors that influence deep sea coral distribution and condition, 2) characterize distribution and abundance of deep sea coral communities, and 3) inform proposed changes to EFH and Sanctuary boundaries.

The Program focused its at-sea research efforts on the West Coast in 2010 and 2011 at Gulf of Farallones, Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary (NMS), Olympic NMS, Channel Islands and the Southern California Bight. Dr. Clark stressed the difficulty of finding coral and sponge habitat and that the success of the research efforts are strongly enhanced by multi-beam sonar mapping of the seafloor prior to coral surveys. Surveys confirmed the presence of deep-sea coral and sponge communities with numerous rockfish species in some areas. Notably, new species and a new genus have been identified at Channel Islands NMS. An interactive image database for this cruise is posted at <http://swfsc.noaa.gov/DeepseaCoralImageDatabase/>.

The analysis of current research will summarize densities and species composition of corals and sponges, and will quantify associations of fish with sponges and corals. Analysis results are being folded into the current Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat review process. A final report will be available after the three-year field effort is completed. Summarized coral and sponge data from the 2007 coral report is now hosted on the OSU-PaCOOS ([www.pacoos.coas.oregonstate.edu/MarineHabitat](http://www.pacoos.coas.oregonstate.edu/MarineHabitat)) interactive GIS website. The Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program asked the HC for input into research priorities for FY2012;

the HC suggested focusing on areas off Cape Mendocino because of the presence of rocky habitat in that area.

### **Proposed Housing Development in San Francisco Bay**

In Redwood City, California, Cargill Salt is proposing filling in approximately 1436 acres of unused salt evaporation ponds in order to build 12,000 new homes. These salt evaporation ponds offer an opportunity for habitat restoration and are in an area that is susceptible to sea level rise. The HC will continue to track this issue.

PFMC

11/6/11