

REPORT OF THE HABITAT STEERING GROUP

Situation: The Habitat Steering Group (HSG) will review a draft letter for Council action regarding support of continued funding from the National Undersea Research Program for research on Heceta Bank off the central Oregon Coast (see attached Heceta Bank Draft Letter 1). This research will help quantify relationships between groundfish populations and habitat, document changes in fish populations that have occurred over a ten year period, help refine the design of stock assessment surveys, look at impacts of fishing gear, and characterize the extent of natural refugia on Heceta Bank.

From the Council's agenda, the HSG will review and comment on (1) the draft Marine Reserve Report, (2) the sections of the Groundfish Strategic Plan for habitat, marine reserves, and science and data collection, and (3) the Research and Data Needs document. The HSG comments for this items will be reported separately under the appropriate Council Agendum.

Additionally, the HSG will receive background presentations on kelp management issues based on a draft report prepared by the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) (see attached MBNMS Executive Summary) and a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) report, *The Habitat Approach*, which describes implementation of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for salmon. The HSG will also receive updates on Klamath River water flow issues, the Federal Columbia River Project System Biological Opinion, and other issues that the HSG has been tracking.

Council Action:

1. Consider proposed draft letter to the National Undersea Research Program and the West Coast and Polar Regions Undersea Research Center supporting continued research on Heceta Bank.
2. Consider other comments and recommendations developed by the HSG at the September meeting.

Reference Materials:

1. Draft letter regarding Heceta Bank research to National Undersea Research Program and West Coast and Polar Regions Undersea Research Center (Exhibit C.2, Heceta Banks Draft Letter 1).
2. Executive Summary of Draft Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Kelp Management Report - 06/02/00 (Exhibit C.2, MBNMS Ex. Summary).
3. Excerpt from Draft Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Kelp Management Report - 06/02/00 (Ancillary D, MBNMS Report Excerpt).
4. *The Habitat Approach* - Implementation of Section 7 of the ESA for Actions Affecting the Habitat of Pacific Anadromous Salmonids (Ancillary D, NMFS Report).
5. Report of the Habitat Steering Group (Exhibit C.2, Supplemental HSG Report).

PFMC
08/29/00