

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
ADOPTION OF DRAFT REBUILDING PLANS FOR PUBLIC REVIEW FOR PACIFIC OCEAN PERCH,
LINGCOD, COWCOD, WIDOW ROCKFISH, AND DARKBLOTCHED ROCKFISH

The Habitat Committee recommends the draft rebuilding plans for darkblotched rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, cowcod, and lingcod be adopted for public review pending completion of socioeconomic and other incomplete analyses, and the following items identified by the Habitat Committee (HC):

Ensure language in all rebuilding plans is consistent with the final rule on essential fish habitat (EFH). The environmental consequences section should include an analysis of the various alternatives with respect to fishing activities that adversely affect EFH. The analysis should specify the type and function of affected habitat and the extent and frequency of disturbance. The description of the affected environment should specify benefits of existing management measures helping to minimize adverse effects of fishing gear on EFH.

The description of the affected environment for Pacific ocean perch (POP) (section 3.2.1) refers to spawning aggregations occurring in September and October. The analysis of the impacts from the alternatives should include the effects of fishing during this potentially vulnerable period on the stock productivity and bycatch of associated species.

The description of the affected environment for lingcod (section 3.1.1) describes male lingcod behavior patterns associated with nest guarding in relatively shallow areas, and the increased egg mortality associated with removal of the nest guarding male, but no mention of the impacts from the alternatives on the population is made in the analysis. We recommend that the effects of the alternatives on the population and spawning habitat be addressed, and at least one alternative include measures to restrict fishing impacts to those areas during critical time frames.

The effect of gear modification (e.g., reduced mouth trawls) on bycatch of lingcod, POP, and darkblotched rockfish is discussed in the analysis of impacts (section 4.2.1), but there is no mention of the relative effects on habitat of alternative gear types. The effects of any gear modifications included in alternatives should have a discussion of potential impacts, both positive and negative, on benthic habitat.

PFMC
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