

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
REVIEW OF PROPOSAL FOR MARINE RESERVES IN STATE WATERS OF THE
CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

The Habitat Committee (HC) recommends establishing a marine reserve at the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS), but rather than endorsing the preferred alternative, or deferring to the MLPA, the HC prefers the alternative that protects the most habitat. There are several current developments in fisheries management that led the HC to this conclusion. Among these are concerns over rebuilding overfished species, potential closures in marine protected areas, and potential management closures on the continental shelf, which may result in shifts in fishing effort. Also, the Sanctuary's Science Advisory Panel recommended that marine protected areas protect a minimum of 30% to 50% of all available habitat. While none of the options meet this target, the HC feels that the greatest area protected provides the greatest potential for improved biological productivity.

The HC also recognizes that:

- California's Channel Islands are a unique ecosystem
- The CINMS proposal contributes to meeting the biodiversity goals of California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and CINMS
- The Channel Islands contain essential fish habitat and are likely to contain habitat areas of particular concern, and contribute to meeting these protection goals
- CINMS would contribute to the cumulative effects of a network of marine protected areas
- The CINMS proposal would provide the first opportunity on the West Coast to have a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) and associated control sites for study purposes
- The specific effects of the marine protected area will vary according to management decisions
- San Miguel Island, the area known as the "footprint," and the Gull Island parcel are particularly valuable for cowcod, bocaccio, lingcod, and potentially yelloweye.

The HC would also like to emphasize the importance of ensuring research funding for continued monitoring and enforcement and to study the habitat impacts of fishing on the boundaries of the area, and displacement of effort to other areas.

We support the Scientific and Statistical Committee's conclusion that this marine reserve is not likely to have stock-wide benefits for rebuilding, but it may have local population-level benefits. Additionally, these reserves may become part of a system which cumulatively could have stock-wide benefits. Our comments are given in the context of both state and federal waters proposed for MPAs.

PFMC
06/20/02

Mark Powell