



GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM STATEMENT ON UPDATE ON OTHER MARINE RESERVES PROCESSES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received a report from Dr. Richard Parrish, National Marine Fisheries Service, on a proposal to evaluate and site a series of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) along the California coast in federal waters. The California Department of Fish and Game held ten highly contentious public hearings last year as part of its Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) process. A revised process and timeline for the MLPA effort has been established with the potential adoption of MPAs sometime in 2005. The current vision for this effort is to undertake a process with increased, and more formal public involvement at the regional level to evaluate a series of MPAs in state waters. While the MLPA process is focused upon MPAs in state waters, Dr. Parrish's proposal is to coordinate the MLPA process with the Council process and extend some of the state MPAs into federal waters to provide protection for groundfish habitat.

The question Dr. Parrish posed to the GMT was with respect to possible coordination of the state and federal processes. If this effort is initially undertaken only at the state level, this may result in redundant, or perhaps conflicting efforts, if the results of the state endeavor were to be considered for expansion into federal waters. The GMT was sensitive to this question and believes that the Council's essential fish habitat (EFH) environmental impact statement (EIS) scoping process may provide an opportunity for coordination.

The GMT recognizes that providing opportunity for public involvement and comment early in the process is key to the success of any effort to employ MPAs. The extension of some of the California state MPAs into federal waters to provide habitat protection for groundfish could be a reasonable EFH alternative for analysis. If the Council believes that this is an appropriate approach, Dr. Parrish could provide a presentation to the Council's EFH EIS coordinating committee (either the Ad Hoc Groundfish EIS Oversight Committee or Habitat Committee).

PFMC
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