

Preliminary Recommendations of the ad hoc Groundfish Habitat Technical Review Committee

The ad hoc Groundfish Habitat Technical Review Committee met February 19-20, 2003 in Seattle and made the recommendations outlined below. The committee was formed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council to guide a scientific assessment of Pacific Coast Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat.

1. The committee unanimously endorses the bayesian approach to modeling EFH/HAPC and adverse impacts but notes that a reasonable degree of caution is prudent at this point prior to the models being made final. Conclusive recommendations for utilizing the models as the foundation for policy decisions will be made after the committee reviews the final product.
2. The committee believes that the modeling process could proceed with the information that is currently available. However, it would be extremely worthwhile to make improvements to the data during the period of time it will take to fully develop and run the model. Specific suggestions are provided below.
3. The committee recommends that the next meeting occur in time to monitor progress and review preliminary model runs.

Tasks

- Complete risk assessment models (EFH/HAPC designation and adverse impacts).
- Contract for interpretation of literature on fishing gear impacts to develop a “west coast perspective.” The interpretation would provide a key input into the risk assessment.
- Groundtruth fishing effort data. Compare observer data and input from fishermen with results of Ecotrust fishing effort model.
- Develop GIS layer of priority non-fishing activities for cumulative effects portion of risk assessment model.
- Develop GIS layer of priority invertebrate distribution by mining survey and other relevant data.
- Overlay benthic habitat GIS with data layer that indicates data quality.
- Complete GIS data layer of baseline regulatory areas that are protective of habitat.
- Build the NOS Habitat Suitability Index into the risk assessment models.
- Complete EFH Appendix database.