

## REPORT OF THE HABITAT COMMITTEE

The Habitat Committee (HC) met on Monday, June 16 and discussed the following topics. Comments on marine reserves and the Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be made during those agenda items.

### **Klamath Update**

The HC discussed a draft letter to the Bureau of Reclamation (Exhibit D.1, Supplemental Attachment 3) regarding the Draft EIS for the Klamath River project. While this letter was not completed in time to be included in your briefing materials, the HC believes it is consistent with prior letters the Council has submitted on this issue as well as the letter from the California Resources Agency contained in Exhibit D.1, Attachment 1. In order to submit comments by the early September deadline, the Council would need to take action at this meeting.

### **Federal Energy Regulatory Commission/Hanford Reach Update**

The HC discussed flows and stranding issues for fall chinook in the Hanford Reach. A study of stranding issues associated with ramping flows in the Hanford Reach is ongoing. There are no specific results to report at this time, but the HC continues to monitor the issue, and will update the Council as necessary.

A massive draft license application has been submitted for Priest Rapids and Wanapum Dams on the Columbia River. Juvenile passage and stranding in the Hanford Reach are important issues associated with these projects. The HC recommends the Council provide comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) during the current public comment period. A letter to that effect is included in your briefing book (Exhibit D.1, Attachment 2). The HC reviewed the letter and proposed the modifications suggested in Exhibit D.1, Supplemental Revised Attachment 2. The proposed modifications do not significantly change the content of the letter, but attempt to provide additional clarity. Because of the size and complexity of this application, the HC recommends focusing current comments on Hanford Reach flows, since this issue can be linked directly to Council fisheries. In order to provide comments to FERC by the mid-August deadline, the Council would need to take action at this meeting.

### **Other Issues**

The HC also heard a report on the NEPTUNE project, which will be a permanent network of undersea research stations connected by fiber-optic cables. This is an international effort that would enhance data collection and research for fisheries management and many other purposes. The stations anticipated would be at a variety of depths and locations off the West Coast and Canada. The HC will keep the Council updated on this project, which is slated for implementation during the next decade.

We also heard an update on new black rockfish research that uses otolith chemistry to track juvenile fish movement. This research may provide useful information on early life history migration of black rockfish and may be applied to other species as well.