



OREGON FISHERMEN'S CABLE COMMITTEE

Established as Oregon Fishermen's Undersea Cable Committee July 9, 1998

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Bob Lohn, Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE, Building 1
Seattle, WA 98115

RECEIVED

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Dear Mr. Lohn:

PFMC

I am one of two fishing industry representatives on the Habitat Technical Review Committee (HTR Committee) working on the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) EIS for Groundfish. As part of the process, a model has been created to identify EFH for groundfish. The model uses habitat information and a Habitat Utilization Database along with other inputs to map the Habitat Suitability Probability (HSP) for each life stage of each of 82 species of groundfish. The HTR Committee met in Portland in December to review the range of options for the PFMC to consider in designating EFH, and to review the model and the HSP maps. While the model is quite sophisticated and capable of producing extremely useful results, it quickly became apparent that there were some significant errors in the maps that were produced by the model. In fact, nearly every map that was reviewed had to be changed. Some of the corrections were needed due to incorrect data feeding the model, others because the model lacked the inputs that local experts at the meeting provided. The HTR Committee reviewed less than 50 of the 160 maps created. As the Committee's 12/8/04 statement says, "...the HSP approach and the data consolidated for the EIS is an important advance that, with updates and maintenance, will continue to improve the Council's and NMFS' ability to effectively manage EFH."

My concern is that the maps won't hold up under public scrutiny. The fishing industry will likely have little faith in the EFH process and any EFH regulatory changes if the maps are inaccurate in showing where fish live. As originally created, the maps have glaring discrepancies, some showing species of fish in areas that they do not live, others showing lower probability of fish in areas that the fish are heavily fished.

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At the meeting, the HTR committee made an initial review of some of the maps. What is needed is a series of "ground-truthing" workshops along the west coast where local fishermen and scientists can review the Habitat Utilization Database and the output HSP maps and make the necessary corrections. I believe I speak for the committee in saying that a collaborative process involving commercial fishermen and fisheries and habitat scientists would be quite beneficial in making the needed corrections to the maps and the Habitat Utilization Database that feeds into the model. While the information would make the model and the HSP map more accurate, the information shared would be valuable in its own right to the fishermen and scientists involved.

The Port Liaison Project (PLP) is interested in funding fishermen's time and expenses for such collaborative workshops. As a port coordinator for the PLP, I think this a perfect example of the type of cooperative research projects the PLP was intended to support. What is needed is funding for the other costs—GIS technicians, meeting rooms and other logistical support, etc.

I request that funding for collaborative meetings be made available so the model can be corrected and the PFMC can have more accurate maps to base EFH decisions on. With a modest investment from NMFS and the PLP, I believe we can make these maps reliable and useful to the Council for EFH and fisheries management.

Best regards,



Scott McMullen, Oregon Fishing Industry Representative
Habitat Technical Review Committee

cc: Steve Freese, Acting Assistant Regional Administrator, NMFS NWR
Steve Copps, Senior Policy Analyst, NMFS NWR
✓ Don McIsaac, Executive Director, PFMC
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Ginny Goblirsch, Project Co-Director, Port Liaison Project
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