

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
AMENDMENT 19 – (ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT)

The Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed draft fishery management plan (FMP) amendatory language addressing the groundfish essential fish habitat (EFH). We believe the draft language accurately captures the intent of the Council's June 2005 decision identifying its preferred alternative. The HC has the following more detailed comments:

1. Section 6.2.4 Habitat Conservation Framework (page 28), the HC is identified as the body with responsibility to review and make recommendations regarding areas currently closed to fishing. We are concerned that HC in its present form has neither the full range of expertise nor the time resources to thoroughly conduct such analyses. The HC may need additional resources in order to fulfill the intent of this section. We also suggest that the phrase "*or its advisory bodies*" be struck from the sixth sentence of that paragraph, since we believe all proposals and HC tasks should be vetted through the Council prior to initiation of any work effort.
2. We recommend adding a sentence to the first paragraph of section 7.1 (page 59) indicating that artificial structures are specifically excluded from this definition of substrate except as provided in Section 7.3.1.6 (Oil Production Platforms, Page 67). The assumption is that artificial structures are not included as EFH unless specifically identified through habitat areas of particular concern or amendment processes.
3. In Section 7.2 (Page 60), we suggest the phrase "*sea bottom*" be replaced with "*substrate*," to ensure consistency with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act definition.