

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT

Hydrokinetic Energy

The Habitat Committee (HC) discussed hydrokinetic (wave and tidal) energy projects. The status of projects off the West Coast follows:

Oregon

The Reedsport Ocean Power Technologies (OPT) project is in a “settlement” process that includes the State of Oregon, Federal agencies, and others. The purpose of the process is to agree upon needed biological studies as a precursor to OPT’s draft license application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The settlement process is reported to be making progress, but three important areas need to be resolved: 1) species impact studies from electromagnetic fields; 2) a salvage plan; and 3) an adaptive management plan. The adaptive management plan would include indicators and responses to unforeseen environmental impacts. OPT is expected to file its draft license application within a few months, once the settlement process is complete. This will trigger a National Environmental Policy Act process, providing further opportunities for Council comment.

OPT was scheduled to submit a preliminary application document for their proposed Coos Bay project March 7.

Washington

The Makah Bay wave project received a license to conduct a five-year pilot project.

California

There are currently six wave energy projects proposed in California, plus one tidal energy project proposed for San Francisco Bay. California is producing a white paper on the environmental impacts of hydrokinetic energy.

Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Process

The California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) process is continuing on California’s north central coast. At a meeting last week, five proposals were narrowed down to three options. The most aggressive proposal covers approximately 30% of state waters in the north central area, and the least aggressive, about 19%. About half the areas proposed within the three options are no-take reserves. There are a range of fishing options in the other areas, primarily for salmon trolling and crabbing. The California Department of Fish and Game will host another two-day meeting on March 18th and 19th in San Rafael; afterwards, the proposals go to a “Blue Ribbon Task Force” and eventually to the California Fish and Game Commission, which will select an option.

Salmon Spills

On a successful note, a last-minute agreement was reached between Columbia River managers that allowed for a limited release of water over the spillway at Bonneville Dam to benefit the outmigration of the early release of Spring Creek Hatchery tules last week. These fish are an important component of Washington coastal fisheries, and it has been a continual struggle to get adequate protective measures at Bonneville Dam for these fish. Data from USFWS suggest that fish that outmigrate during spill return at a 20% higher rate than fish that don't receive spill.

PFMC
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