

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON FINAL ACTION TO ADOPT MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS FOR 2021-2022 FISHERIES

The Habitat Committee (HC) discussed changes to Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) that are under consideration through various groundfish fishery management plan (FMP) actions. Some background on HC interest may be helpful to the Council, given that the HC does not typically engage in groundfish management actions outside of FMP essential fish habitat reviews.

At the March 2020 Council meeting, the HC learned that relatively large adjustments to the non-trawl RCA adjustments were a potential priority for FMP action sometime in 2021, independent of the 2021-2022 specifications package (Specs). Reasoning that these adjustments were of a size and scale similar to that of Amendment 28, the HC sought to gain an early understanding of the potential action in support of a habitat analysis. The item was approved for discussion on the HC's April agenda, but was moved to June when the April meeting was cancelled.

Since March, however, some RCA adjustments the HC expected in the 2021 FMP action were folded into inseason changes and/or Specs. They included adjustments presented this week that combined the RCA adjustments in the Specs (Agenda Item F.1, Attachment 8) with the [in-season RCA adjustments transmitted to National Marine Fisheries Service \(NMFS\)](#) in April 2020. Given the scale of the RCA adjustments now under consideration for final action, the HC included these actions in its discussion at this meeting.

We appreciate the assistance of Ms. Aja Szumylo and other members of the NMFS West Coast Regional Office staff, as well as members of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT), who joined us for our discussion on June 10. In addition, several members of the HC joined the GMT for a discussion on June 12, which was informative and helpful. The HC was unable to review a habitat impact analysis of the non-trawl RCA adjustments because the analysis was still under development by the GMT.

If the Council requires additional habitat analysis at a future meeting, the HC is available to assist or comment at the Council's request.

Finally, we recognize there is always room for improvement in inter-advisory body communication and coordination, and we are interested in working with the GMT and other advisory bodies as appropriate to improve coordination on proposed management measures that may affect the essential fish habitat of Council-managed species.