

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
EXECUTIVE ORDER 13921: PROMOTING AMERICAN SEAFOOD COMPETITIVENESS
AND ECONOMIC GROWTH – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Diane Windham from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Aquaculture Program briefed the Habitat Committee (HC) on the selection of two Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) in Federal waters, as directed by Executive Order 13921. AOAs are described as areas having high potential for commercial aquaculture. Ms. Windham explained that NOAA selected Southern California and the Gulf of Mexico for further evaluation based on existing spatial information and industry interests, though selection of these regions occurred without public involvement. Each area could have three to five commercial aquaculture operations. Their locations and spatial configurations would be determined through public processes involving stakeholders and government bodies. NOAA is proposing to develop a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for AOAs. Ten additional AOAs are to be selected nationwide by 2025.

This is concerning for an industry that has yet to be tested on the West Coast. The HC recommends that the Council request that NOAA conduct an essential fish habitat consultation on the Programmatic EIS early in NOAA's process.

PFMC
09/11/20