

GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON CURRENT HABITAT ISSUES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received an overview of current habitat issues from Ms. Jennifer Gilden, Pacific Fishery Management Council staff, and offers the following comments.

The GAP's primary habitat concern is regarding offshore wind energy development. The GAP remains concerned that, absent consultation with the seafood industry, siting of offshore energy projects may prevent access to productive fishing grounds and disrupt traditional fishing effort.

The GAP recognizes the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is interested in siting projects offshore of both Oregon and California. BOEM has established Intergovernmental Task Forces in both states but neither allow directed stakeholder involvement. The GAP [commented on this issue in April 2014](#), and nothing has changed:

One of the overarching issues to which the GAP has spoken before is the lack of inclusion of the seafood industry in siting wind and wave energy projects in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) off the West Coast. While the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) works with the Oregon Renewable Energy Intergovernmental Task Force, the members of that body consist solely of state and Federal agencies and elected officials. It is unclear if states and Federal representatives on the task force are knowledgeable about fisheries and the significant fishery disruptions that siting decisions could cause. Moreover and most critical, there is no allowance for seafood industry representatives nor any opportunity for the seafood industry to interact directly with BOEM through a process like the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

We appreciate the Council's involvement in the past on this issue and request it remain engaged on projects such as offshore wind and wave energy that may affect Council-related fisheries.

Now, the California Energy Commission (CEC) is seeking comments for proposed wind siting areas off California and extended the public comment deadline to September 30, 2020. The GAP supports the [draft Habitat Committee letter](#) (Agenda Item J.1, Attachment 1) to the CEC and requests the Council submit it to the CEC.

Furthermore, recognizing the [Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel report](#) under this agenda item, the GAP agrees that any spatial planning exercise or siting proposal should consider the effects of project placement on transect lines for established scientific surveys. For example, the groundfish trawl surveys depend on years of data and established metrics to provide accurate stock assessments. Introducing changes may increase the uncertainty of those assessments; GAP members heard that interruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and cancellations of some surveys will increase uncertainties. The GAP suggests the Council request the Scientific and Statistical Committee consider the proposed siting areas and provide comments on how those areas may affect scientific surveys.