

COASTAL PELAGIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING UPDATE

Several members of the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) attended the online Habitat Committee (HC) meeting on February 24, 2021 on Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOA) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the National Center for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS); and offshore wind energy by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). The CPSMT appreciates the information provided by these groups and the very thorough presentations. The CPSMT also had the opportunity to review the HC supplemental report on this agenda item and appreciates them making this report available so quickly.

The CPSMT shares the HC's concern relative to the information used by BOEM and NCCOS to determine project sites. The CPSMT recognizes that various agencies, BOEM, NMFS, and NCCOS, are involved in the two distinct marine planning projects with some degree of collaboration and consultation already underway. The CPSMT encourages further discussion as to how the Council, its advisory bodies, and the public can best engage.

The CPSMT notes the fishery data used in determining potential areas for development span from only 2010 to 2018. This time period includes data from a Pacific sardine fishery that has been closed since 2015, thus potentially missing important Pacific sardine fishing areas. In addition, this closure has likely impacted the distribution and scale of CPS fisheries that incidentally harvest sardine due to the constraints imposed by the incidental catch allowances for Pacific sardine. This could potentially misrepresent how these CPS fisheries would operate, temporally and spatially, under less stringent conditions. The CPSMT sees this as a concern as it may not accurately characterize the CPS fisheries and thus might result in development in areas where a CPS fishery operates. The CPSMT recommends that the BOEM, NMFS, and NCCOS use longer fishery datasets to better inform how their projects might impact CPS fisheries.

The CPSMT also looks forward to additional information regarding how these fishery datasets were analyzed, so that the Council, its advisory bodies, and the public will be better able to comment on site evaluations and provide input as these marine spatial planning processes move forward.

PFMC
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