

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA AND WORKLOAD PLANNING

As the Council is aware, the Habitat Committee (HC) was tasked with hosting the Marine Planning agenda item (C.2) on Aquaculture Opportunity Areas and Wind Energy.

Issues that fall under the marine planning umbrella cover multiple disciplines and interests. In this way, marine planning is similar to the Fishery Ecosystem Plan process and requires similarly multi-discipline attention and expertise, including fishery-specific knowledge. Much of the expertise that should be considered with respect to siting are beyond the Habitat Committee's current abilities, purview, and workload. The HC discussed at length its September 2020 recommendation that the Council consider appointing a marine spatial planning ad hoc advisory body with the appropriate expertise, or developing an alternate mechanism for advising the Council and engaging stakeholder participation. As offshore development expands, the data sets and tools being developed will undoubtedly be used as the starting point in future screening and siting processes.

According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) published timeline for selecting the next region(s) for possible aquaculture opportunity areas, NOAA began the selection process this (2020-2021) winter, and will be announcing their selection of the next region(s) this spring. The timeline was not discussed during the webinar, so it is unclear if NOAA is on track for this timeline. If the next region includes the west coast, there will be additional workload associated with that aquaculture opportunity area process.

PFMC
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