

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT
ON REVIEW OF ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT -- PHASE 2

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) discussed the Phase 2 Action Plan for Highly Migratory Species Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Review in the March 2021 Council briefing book ([H.2, Attachment 1](#)). Some HMSMT members also listened to the Habitat Committee (HC) discussion of the Action Plan.

While the Action Plan provides a good general outline of tasks to be addressed in Phase 2 of the EFH review, the HMSMT offers the following recommendations for its further refinement:

1. Revise the task “Develop updated maps depicting the range of species for associated life stages” in the current Action Plan to read “Develop maps depicting the range of species at each life stage”.
2. Decide whether revised maps should be limited to the portion of HMS Management Unit Species (MUS) ranges inside the west coast Exclusive Economic Zone or should include the full range of HMS MUS across the Pacific Ocean.
3. Clarify whether the current meeting is the start of a three-meeting process for plan amendment or would this begin with the presentation to the Council of Phase 2 review results in September 2021.
4. Consider the role of the HMSMT in future work on the EFH Review, and schedule sufficient time for the HMSMT to work with Southwest Fisheries Science Center Fisheries Resources Division staff involved in the review to complete tasks in the Action Plan.

The HMSMT also discussed the HC report ([H.2.a, Supplemental HC Report 1](#)) in the briefing book. The current version of the Phase 2 Action Plan includes examination of preferred HMS prey species and evaluation of whether new information warrants designation of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). The HMSMT notes that HAPC designation is a component of the EFH review process. Any HAPCs that are identified may play a role in the evaluation of current and future proposals for development of offshore wind energy and aquaculture.

The HC report contained a recommendation about analysis of whether or how fishery removals of HMS prey species may affect HMS EFH. The HMSMT recommends the Council consider if questions regarding prey items would be more appropriately addressed under the scope of the Council’s existing management processes for any HMS prey species within the Council’s purview.

The HMSMT agrees with the HC recommendation for the Council to clarify its habitat conservation objectives in the Action Plan. Based on the outcome of the Phase 2 review, the Council could later consider whether additional conservation measures are warranted relative to HMS EFH.