

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON REVIEW OF ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT

The Habitat Committee (HC) thanks Dr. Emmanis Dorval and Ms. Lorna Wargo of the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) for presenting a summary of Phase 1 of the CPS Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) review to the HC. The HC believes there is sufficient information to proceed to Phase 2.

The HC recommends the Phase 2 scope and objectives include the seven tasks (a-g) offered by the CPSMT on page 6 of their report. Furthermore, the HC recommends that Phase 2:

1. Evaluate whether known aggregations or hotspots for other CPS species, in addition to market squid, should be considered Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). The HAPC definition is not limited to fixed habitat features and includes conditions that provide important ecological function—for example, HAPCs for salmon include thermal refugia. As noted in the Phase 1 report, new studies identified marine canyons as hotspots for krill, and there is enough new information on spawning habitat for sardine, anchovy, and other life stages that will be used to update the species maps and could help identify HAPCs. Benefits of HAPC designation are that Federal actions are reviewed with increased scrutiny during the EFH consultation process and can be used as a tool for focusing conservation efforts.
2. Evaluate the adverse impacts from non-fishing actions including new actions stemming from recent Federal initiatives promoting aquaculture in estuaries and oceans, offshore energy development, and desalination plants. The groundfish fishery management plan EFH appendix can provide updated information on some of these activities.
3. Evaluate whether dynamic habitat changes (e.g., upwelling, dissolved oxygen, primary production) in addition to sea surface temperature deserve further consideration in the EFH description or other sections (e.g., maps, fishing and non-fishing impacts).