HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
RESEARCH AND DATA NEEDS UPDATE

The Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed the electronic database prototype developed to house and track priorities of the Pacific Fishery management Council (Council's) research and data needs as updated in the 2018 Research and Data Needs document. As part of this review, the HC compared the prototype with the database used by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC). The HC makes the following recommendations:

- For the column "Research Focus (Fishery Management Plan [FMP], Fishery Ecosystem Plan, Other)," add "Habitat." Currently, the choices include "Social Sciences," "Ecosystem," and "FMP species." Having a dedicated habitat option would ensure habitat research is highlighted and more easily located during a search of the database. The HC also recommends adding habitat as a selection under the column "Council Action" to more clearly link select Council actions to habitat research, e.g., Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) reviews.

- A simple, uncomplicated structure for the database would be optimal, although the structure's complexity would differ depending on who the database is supposed to serve. If the database is to be used as a tracking tool for the Council, advisory bodies and research partners, then more complexity may be warranted. If the database is for public use, then simpler is better.

- Create a separate field/column for HC research priorities so that these can be viewed separately from the Council and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) priorities. Habitat research and data needs are unique and are associated with EFH provisions for the four Council-managed FMPs and ecosystem-based fishery management.

- If the Council and SSC agree with the creation of a separate "HC research priorities" field/column, then the HC would like the opportunity to prioritize the habitat-focused research and data needs from the 2018 Research and Data Needs document and could do so during one of the remaining 2021 Council meetings.

- The HC reviewed the NPFMC ranks for research and data needs and found the ranks which include "critical ongoing monitoring," "urgent," "important," "strategic," and "pending" to be more informative than "high," "medium," and "low." The HC recommends considering and adopting a more informative classification system for priorities, which might include a hybrid of the two systems.

- Identifying a process and timeline for maintaining the database after it is developed will be important to ensure it remains functional and useful.

PFMC
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