

## ECOSYSTEM WORKGROUP REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING

The Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG) discussed marine planning at our meeting on September 10, 2021, where we had an opportunity to review the draft Marine Planning Committee (MPC) statement on this agenda item. We note that the Council's work on these issues supports the Fishery Ecosystem Plan's Objective 3b is to: *Continue to monitor and engage in opportunities to minimize and mitigate the effects of non-fishing activities on the ecosystem to better ensure that conservation benefits are not undermined by negative impacts of these activities.*

The EWG recognizes the background work from the Habitat Committee on these issues and appreciates the MPC's work to both share briefing information with the public on September 1st, and to bring together cohesive comments on these projects. The EWG believes that the Council family faces a steep learning curve on how the Council and public can most effectively interact with the process for analyzing new offshore activities and help shape the alternatives that BOEM and other agencies consider for analysis. Nonetheless, it is critical that potential ecosystem impacts are both considered and mitigated where and when possible.

We appreciate the Council's foresight in getting the MPC underway and recommend that the Council:

- Append a copy of Chapter 5 of the 2013 Fishery Ecosystem Plan, *PFMC Policy Priorities for Ocean Resource Management*, to its letters to BOEM and to the CLSC, noting that environmental analyses of the effects of new offshore energy installations on the environment should, at a minimum, address the issues in that chapter. The EWG also notes that the Council is preliminarily scheduled to review a revised version of that chapter as a standalone guidance document at its meeting in March 2022;
- For itself or for the MPC and the public, request a briefing from NMFS on the potential effects of offshore wind energy installations on managed and protected marine resources and other components of the ecosystem, physical ocean processes, socio-economic conditions in coastal communities, and on the agency's scientific activities, including research surveys, in support of Council management responsibilities;
- For itself or for the MPC and the public, request a briefing from the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the potential effects of offshore wind energy installations on seabirds and seabird colonies of the US West Coast. The Council has developed numerous fishery management measures over the years that support a healthy forage base for seabirds and other marine predators and the EWG is uncertain whether BOEM's proposed Wind Energy Areas include foraging grounds for West Coast seabirds;
- Request that the US Coast Guard join with BOEM on any environmental analyses of activities, such as installation of offshore wind farms or turbines that would induce the Coast Guard to consider designating Safety Zones or Security Zones that prohibit fishing vessels from operating near offshore wind energy equipment. It is the EWG's understanding that, while BOEM permits the installation of equipment that will exclude fishing vessels from operating in areas around that equipment, it is the Coast Guard that develops and implements the regulations to implement the areas closed to fishing, known as either Safety Zones or Security Zones, intended to keep the fishing public safe from collisions and other interactions with offshore energy equipment (33 CFR Part 165).

- Forward our [Supplemental EWG Report 1](#) on agenda item C.2.C from the March 2021 meeting (especially section 2) to the MPC for its consideration of the potential effects of wind energy installations on the ecosystem.

PFMC

09/11/21