

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

The Habitat Committee (HC) discussed the proposed Magnuson-Steven Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) Reauthorization bill (“Sustaining America’s Fisheries for the Future Act of 2021”) from Rep. Huffman (H.R. 4690). Specifically, the HC focused on whether there should be more specific authority for monitoring of the effectiveness of essential fish habitat (EFH), specific programs for collection of gear impacts studies and data, and clearer procedures for modifying EFH designations in light of likely future climate change-driven changes in ocean habitats and migration routes. The HC believes that wherever there is bill language specifying additional research and assessment programs, habitat should specifically be included in these programs.

The HC was also interested in H.R. 3684 (the INVEST in America Act infrastructure bill), which contains a great deal of funding for multiple habitat restoration and marine research projects. This bill is now under consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives.

State Bills of Council Interest: Oregon recently passed H.B. 3375 in support of offshore wind power development, establishing a three-gigawatt development goal by 2030, with provisions for additional research and prompt decommissioning of obsolete offshore wind power facilities to avoid future conflicts with fishing operations.

There is a similar wind power development goals-setting bill in the California Legislature (A.B. 525) requiring the California Energy Commission (CEC) to develop a strategic plan for offshore wind development by Dec. 31, 2022, with advice of a “stakeholder working group,” that has already passed the California Assembly and is still working its way through various Senate committees.

PFMC
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