

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

Habitat Committee (HC) members were briefed on the final draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) at the Ecosystem Workgroup's (EWG) Sept. 2 webinar and through the EWG video presentation. The HC commends the EWG for this monumental undertaking and the resulting improvements to the FEP, and offers a few additional suggestions for consideration:

Chapter 3:

The HC noticed that the section on seafloor habitat classification (Section 3.2.3) was omitted from the current draft FEP. The HC believes it is important to retain the habitat classification for its relevance in describing the seafloor component of the California Current Ecosystem (CCE) and because it is foundational to the essential fish habitat (EFH) descriptions of several managed species, fish distribution models, EFH Conservation Areas and habitat area of particular concern designations, and the evaluation of non-fishing impacts. The HC understands that the EWG is receptive to retaining this section pending this recommendation.

Chapter 4:

Table 4.2 in Section 4.3 (*Human Activities and Marine Habitats*) provides a list of non-fishing actions and activities that the HC and National Marine Fisheries Service previously prioritized as items to bring to the Council's attention. The HC recommends this table also be included in the anticipated stand-alone guidance document on non-fishing agency activities (*PFMC Guidance on Agency Activities in the CCE*).

Chapter 5:

This section could be improved by incorporating habitat science principles and habitat-based indicators into the ecosystem science framework. For example, the Habitat Assessment Improvement Plan (NMFS, Yoklavich et al. 2010) and Thorson et al. (2021) specified avenues for incorporating habitat information into stock assessments. Likewise, the 2020 Ecosystem Status Review (Harvey et al. 2021) specified new habitat-based indicators for Sacramento fall Chinook salmon and Klamath fall Chinook salmon developed by the HC in 2020 in response to addressing potential non-fishing impacts related to rebuilding plans.

Finally, the HC looks forward to reviewing the upcoming guidance document anticipated in March 2022 that will inform agencies about habitat considerations for Council-managed species, particularly in light of the accelerated pace of new ocean uses. The HC encourages the Council to move forward with developing this important guidance document.

References from above

Harvey, C., Garfield, et al. 2021. Ecosystem Status Report of the California Current for 2020-21: A Summary of Ecosystem Indicators Compiled by the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Team (CCIEA).

Thorson JT, Hermann AJ, Siwicke K, and Zimmerman M. 2021. Grand challenge for habitat science: stage-structured responses, nonlocal drivers, and mechanistic associations among habitat variables affecting fishery productivity. ICES Journal of Marine Science, fsaa236. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsaa236>

Yoklavich, M.M., Blackhart, K., Brown, S.K., Greene, C.M., Minello, T.J., Noji, T.T., Parke, M., Parrish, F.A., Smith, K., Stone, R.P. and Wakefield, W.W., 2010. Marine fisheries habitat assessment improvement plan: report of the National Marine Fisheries Service Habitat Assessment improvement Plan Team.

PFMC
09/10/21