

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING

The Habitat Committee (HC) reviewed the report of the Marine Planning Committee (MPC) (Agenda Item C.2.a, Supplemental MPC Report 1) through a habitat lens. The HC generally supports comments of the MPC and offers additional comments regarding those topics covered in the MPC report.

### **NOAA Aquaculture Opportunity Areas**

The HC notes that the Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOA) Atlas to be published as a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Technical Memorandum) is a large and detailed document and will take time to explore and digest. The HC understands that this is a product that will be used to support analyses presented in the programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the AOAs. Although there is not a public comment opportunity on the Atlas, if there is something the Council notes is missing in the Atlas, it might be missing in the analysis in the programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Any such omissions should be raised during the public comment period on the Notice of Intent (NOI) for the programmatic environmental impact statement. We fully support the MPC's recommendation that the Council ask NOAA to ensure the public comment period for the NOI is at least 60 days in duration and covers at least one Council meeting. The HC recommends that the MPC take the lead on any comments from the Council regarding this topic, with collaboration between the HC for topics relating to habitat.

### **Policy Document on Offshore Development**

The HC supports a unified policy document regarding offshore development, coordinated between the MPC, the HC, and the Ecosystem Workgroup. This policy document would set out expectations about what processes should be followed (e.g. to solicit fishing effort information), what data analyses should be conducted, and the like. This policy document should be supplemented with specific comments for individual actions or projects under consideration, as necessary.

### **Morro Bay Wind Energy Area**

The HC supports a quick response process letter to Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in response to its request for comments on the scope and other information to be included in the Environmental Assessment regarding the Morro Bay and Humboldt Wind Energy Areas. The HC recommends that the letter include habitat-related comments from prior HC comment letters on this subject.