GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) received a briefing from Mr. Kerry Griffin, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff at the GMT's webinar on February 23rd, 2022. Individual GMT members have also listened in on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Oregon Intergovernmental Renewable Task Force meeting on February 25th, as well as the Marine Planning Committee (MPC) meeting on March 4, 2022. The GMT recognizes the significant work that the MPC is doing to coordinate Council response and that to this point the GMT has not provided much specific input. However, the GMT has been tracking this item and would like to offer additional high-level concerns with a nexus to management of fisheries at this time.

The GMT is concerned with the ramifications of areas where wind energy is sited that fall within the areas of ongoing long-term National Marine Fisheries Service Northwest Fisheries Science Center West Coast Groundfish Bottom Trawl and the Joint U.S.-Canada Integrated Ecosystem and Pacific hake Acoustic Trawl surveys, which collect data to inform groundfish species-specific indices of abundance along with other key biological data (e.g., lengths, otoliths, weights), critical pieces of information used in stock assessments. The GMT also believes that there will be consequences for how we manage species if there are large areas closed to all fishing and fishing-adjacent activities (i.e., surveys), thereby restricting biological data collection within these areas. These implications for stock assessments and how stock assessments are interpreted for management are significant and should be considered as we move forward through the planning process.

The GMT notes that BOEM and other partners are using data from the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program to inform potential impacts on commercial fishing activities. We emphasize that while the catch shares fisheries have full observer or electronic monitoring coverage and therefore a census of fishing locations since 2011, coverage in non-catch shares groundfish fisheries is considerably lower (averaging 5-35 percent depending on the sector). While offshore energy development is likely to affect these non-catch shares fisheries, observer data are unlikely to provide a full account of potential impacts. Repercussions for these less-monitored fisheries should be taken into consideration during this process.

The GMT continues to be dismayed at the lack of information and consideration regarding recreational fisheries thus far in these processes, as well as the lack of outreach and plans for future engagement with recreational fishery participants. Recreational fisheries are an important component of marine fisheries off of the U.S. West Coast by providing an important activity for many residents of coastal states and providing significant economic contributions to coastal communities. Therefore, **recreational fisheries and recreational fishery participants need to be included in these processes.**

The GMT stresses that the only way to truly understand and categorize the impact to fisheries is to speak directly to and incorporate comments from the recreational and commercial fishing fleets, individuals, the NMFS Science Centers, and onshore processing operations. **The GMT recommends that BOEM continue with and expand upon their outreach to <u>all</u> commercial <u>and</u> recreational fisheries sectors and consider impacts on commercial, recreational, <u>and</u> scientific activities.**