

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a briefing on this agenda item from Mr. Kerry Griffin, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, and reviewed the Briefing Book materials. The GAP very much appreciates the diligent efforts by Council staff and the Ad Hoc Marine Planning Committee (MPC) in tracking marine planning activities, offshore wind, (OSW) in particular. The regular and comprehensive updates provided to the Council and advisory bodies, as well as the Council letters developed by Mr. Griffin and the MPC about marine planning activities are critically important, especially in communicating Council and fishery participant concerns about actions that will impact Council-managed fisheries.

The [MPC Report 1](#) provides important updates about several activities of interest to the GAP, including OSW activities within waters off the three coastal states, United States Coast Guard (USCG) Pacific Port Access Route Study (PAC PARS), West Coast Oceans Alliance (WCOA), and a NOAA Request for Comments on Resident Perceptions of OSW Energy Development.

Specific to the USCG PAC PARS, the GAP also reviewed the November 3, 2022 letter from Chair Gorelnik to USCG LCDR Sara Conrad and appreciates that the letter conveys GAP recommendations from September 2022. As highlighted by the GAP in September, we continue to recommend the Council urge Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to fully account for information developed under the PAC PARS. Specifically, the Council should highlight the need to move the eastern boundary of the Coos Bay Call Area so that it does not overlap the “Coastal Fairway Zone” identified in the PAC-PARS. Additionally, BOEM should consider modifying the Coos Bay Call Area to accommodate the “Proposed Fairway” identified in the PAC-PARS report. Moreover, BOEM should also account for a navigation fairway through the Coos Bay Call Area to the entrance of Winchester Bay and a navigation fairway from the entrance of Brookings Harbor Northwest through the Brookings Call Area as requested by the Council in their PAC PARS letter to the USCG.

Relative to the WCOA, the GAP encourages the Council to formally engage in this process. It is clear that new and expanded ocean activities that will potentially conflict with Council-managed fisheries continue to emerge and require Council attention. Therefore, it is critical that the Council engage in regional and national marine spatial planning activities. The WCOA appears to be a prime opportunity for the Council to be a part of a “collaborative non-regulatory forum to pursue consensus-driven activities carried out by members in support of more effective and transparent ocean management and planning on the U.S. West Coast” (quoting [MPC Report 1](#)). As an initial step, the GAP recommends that the Council task the MPC with continuing to explore how to effectively partner with WCOA efforts.

The state-specific OSW updates provided in MPC Report 1 are all very informative and the GAP thanks the MPC for their careful attention to these issues. Offshore wind activity off Washington appears to be at a nascent stage relative to activities off Oregon and California. The GAP is aware that coastal communities and fishing organizations are going on the record with concerns about OSW off Washington, including the [Quinalt Indian Nation](#) and the [Grays Harbor County Board of County Commissioners](#); in addition, the GAP was made aware that Westport Charterboat Association is developing a resolution focused on concerns about the negative impacts from OSW,

with specific recommendations to BOEM, state agencies, and local governments related to OSW development off Washington.

[MPC Report 2](#) provides updated information about the BOEM California Final Sale Notice for both the Humboldt and Morro Bay, California; highlighting that “BOEM will hold a mock auction for potential bidders on Dec. 5, 2022, with a full lease auction starting at 7 a.m. on Dec. 6, 2022. BOEM listed 43 bidders as qualified to participate in the auction.” This report also provides an update on BOEM’s use of “suitability modeling” that incorporates a National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) model into BOEM’s efforts to refine the proposed Call Areas off Oregon. A fundamental shortcoming of BOEM’s work off Oregon is that the information about fisheries, communities, research surveys, and the ocean environment that was used in developing the proposed call areas is sorely lacking in its scope and recency. Fishery participants, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Council have continuously expressed this concern to BOEM. It appears that the incorporation of the NCCOS suitability modeling into BOEM’s work off Oregon is intended to address this concern. However, recent presentations from NCCOS and BOEM have not actually included new and expanded information. Therefore, the GAP urges the Council to convey to BOEM the seven questions posed by the MPC in Report 2 with the expectation that BOEM will formally respond to these questions and demonstrate good faith efforts to use the best available information as BOEM moves forward with OSW development off Oregon, which could include reconsideration of the current proposed call areas and must be part of the development of wind energy areas.

In closing, the GAP thanks the Council for your attention to these critically important issues and their potential to harm Council-managed fisheries. We also thank the MPC and Mr. Kerry Griffin for their dedicated and effective efforts to ensure meaningful engagement in these processes.

PFMC
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