

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING

The Habitat Committee (HC) received a briefing from Kerry Griffin and Steve Scheiblaue summarizing relevant topics from the Marine Planning Committee's (MPC's) February 23, 2023 meeting and report ([F.4.a, MPC Report 1](#)). The HC's conversation focused on the programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) and cumulative impacts analysis discussions in MPC Report 1, as well as preparing for the impending release of draft wind energy areas (WEAs) off Oregon.

The HC recognizes there is interest in the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) preparing a PEIS for the California wind energy leases, similar to the [PEIS being prepared for offshore wind activities in the New York Bight](#). Such a PEIS would provide an earlier assessment on the California lease areas prior to preparation of more comprehensive individual EISs following release of construction and operation plans (COPs). This PEIS could provide more information in advance of leasing, but the HC understands that we ultimately need a full EIS for each wind development project to fully analyze potential impacts. The HC also recognizes there are a number of potential issues with a programmatic approach, including the fact that PEISs tend to be general/high-level and lack a depth of analysis/detail required for the complexity of issues, and that the adequacy of a PEIS is largely dependent on the technical expertise on environmental issues. Sufficient information would need to be provided in the PEIS for it to be useful, especially in developing potential programmatic avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and monitoring measures as proposed in the [Notice of Intent To Prepare a PEIS for Future Wind Energy Development in the New York Bight](#). The HC is concerned that the PEIS would not be robust enough to provide necessary insights and inform the individual EISs. If the Council sends a letter to BOEM, the HC recommends requesting that the PEIS provide sufficient technical detail and scope for the individual EISs to tier off or incorporate by reference. In addition, if the PEIS process includes opportunities for communication and feedback, there could be a potential benefit for using the PEIS process to standardize the ways in which these wind energy operations would be required to communicate with entities like the Council.

The HC echoes the MPC's call for a robust cumulative impacts analysis with a broad scope in a potential PEIS. The PEIS should be required to analyze future cumulative impacts on ocean health/ecology/habitat, communities, and fisheries from offshore wind development along the entire west coast. If the Council sends a letter to BOEM, the HC recommends specifying that reasonably expected actions must also be included and analyzed as part of the cumulative impacts analysis in the PEIS.