

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT AMENDMENT –
FINAL ACTION

The Habitat Committee (HC) joined the Coastal Pelagic Species Advisory Subpanel (CPSAS) and the Coastal Pelagic Species Management Team (CPSMT) for a briefing on Final Action for the Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) essential fish habitat (EFH) Review. The HC appreciates the comprehensive efforts of Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, CPSMT, NMFS and others to update CPS EFH. The HC supports the Final Preferred Alternative (FPA) 1B and appreciates that research and data needs are included in the EFH Appendix. This includes the need for research to identify additional squid spawning areas. The HC had supported Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) designation for market squid spawning habitat to allow the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Council to provide additional scrutiny of non-fishing activities during EFH consultations, such as future aquaculture and sediment disposal projects in the Southern California Bight. Furthermore, as noted in the CPS EFH Alternatives document (G.3 Attachment 1) most of the non-fishing activities listed are being added to the CPS fishery management plan (FMP) for the first time. Additional clarification on EFH and HAPC designations would be beneficial in future EFH reviews.

The HC recommends an additional edit regarding the Research and Information section of the EFH Appendix. The current description of EFH for krill species in the U.S. West Coast Exclusive Economic Zone is focused on their pelagic habitat and states that krill do not have a benthic association (Table 2.8 of the EFH Appendix). Globally, research on krill has shown that some species occupy benthic boundary layer habitats, and some species utilize these habitats for feeding (Mauchline and Fisher, 1969; Deja et al., 2019; Kane et al., 2021). Research is warranted to inform this habitat association for West Coast Euphausiids. The HC recommends including this in the Research and Information section.

Deja, K., Ormańczyk, M. and Dragańska-Deja, K. 2019. Plankton or benthos: where krill belongs in Spitsbergen fjords? (Svalbard Archipelago, Arctic). *Polar Biology* 42:1415–1430.

Kane, M.K., Atkinson, A. and Menden-Deue, S. 2021. Lowered cameras reveal hidden behaviors of Antarctic krill. *Current Biology* 31:R237-238.

Mauchline J. and Fisher L.R. 1969. *The Biology of Euphausiids*. Academic Press, London.

PFMC
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