

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON OFFICE OF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES REPORT

The Habitat Committee (HC) received a presentation by Laura Ingulsrud, HC member and Policy Analyst with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) West Coast Region, on the ONMS 8th Annual Coordination Report to keep the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) informed of ONMS activities and programs and to maintain communication and coordination between ONMS and the Council. The report contains an update of activities and programs recently implemented and a preview of upcoming actions of mutual interest, such as sanctuary condition reports or management plan reviews.

The HC would like to focus the Council's attention on several of the activities described in the report.

- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) anticipates a decision on whether to designate the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary by mid-2024.
- The Monterey Bay and Channel Islands Sanctuaries recently completed updating their management plans. The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary anticipates releasing a draft management plan and proposed regulations at the end of 2024, and the Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank Sanctuaries (GFNMS and CBNMS) anticipate initiating a scoping process in winter 2024. The Council will have the opportunity to comment on draft management plans as they become available.
- Currently, the sanctuaries are monitoring underwater soundscapes at 18 listening stations across the West Coast. It is worth noting that some of the listening stations are associated with wind energy areas off California. The HC noted the importance of acoustic monitoring in onshore wave energy and offshore wind energy areas.
- Blue Carbon Research: The Greater Farallones Association, in partnership with NOAA's Office for Coastal Management, conducted the first systematic evaluation of marine sedimentary carbon stocks in north-central California. There is growing global interest in improving scientific knowledge of how carbon stored in the seafloor could be affected by anthropogenic activities. This evaluation is of value to the GFNMS and CBNMS for permitting future activities, so they can better inform where infrastructure should/should not go so those activities are less destructive to seafloor carbon stores.