

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING ISSUES

The Habitat Committee (HC) suggests the following two additions to the Marine Planning Committee Report 1 ([MPC Report 1](#)).

### **Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Offshore Wind Leasing/Site Exploration of Oregon Wind Energy Areas (WEAs)**

The HC would like to provide a brief summary to the Council on some of the key habitat-specific decisions in BOEM's current leasing/site characterization and assessment phase for Oregon WEAs. The Council, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and Oregon had provided several recommendations to BOEM to locate and protect essential fish habitat during this phase of BOEM's process and beyond. Most importantly:

- omit aliquots with sensitive benthic habitats from leasing,
- conduct and fully process high-resolution mapping where data are lacking,
- produce fine-scale substrate classification maps and adhere to Federal (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) mapping/characterization guidelines,
- prohibit boomers and sparkers (geophysical tools employing an active sound source to profile seafloor strata, including sediment layers, faults, and rock outcrops),
- remove metocean buoy anchors and other equipment after use (BOEM deferred to Corps),
- require sufficiently sized buffers around habitat areas of particular concern and other sensitive habitats to protect from anchoring and other bottom-disturbing equipment and surveys.

BOEM only partially accepted the last recommendation but agreed to a minimum buffer size of only 1,000 feet for anchors and 250 feet for all other bottom-disturbing activities. This is far smaller than the 1,000 meters buffer initially recommended by the Council and others in earlier responses to the WEAs. BOEM did agree to future coordination with agencies on some topics.

### **California Energy Commission (CEC) Request for Information: monitoring marine debris related to floating offshore wind (FOSW) entanglement and structural integrity of turbines (informational)**

The California Energy Commission (CEC) released a [Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) to gather information on technologies that can monitor floating offshore wind (FOSW) infrastructure for entangled debris and related information and perspectives. Entanglement monitoring in conjunction with environmental and structural integrity monitoring technologies may provide an opportunity to decrease the cost and environmental impacts of FOSW infrastructure. The comment period for this RFI closed on September 13, 2024. Although the Council was unable to comment on the RFI, there may be future opportunities for the Council to comment on the CEC's process to address these structural integrity issues related to FOSW.