

## HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON RESEARCH AND DATA NEEDS

The Habitat Committee (HC) received a briefing from Marlene Bellman on the staff-proposed framework for the Research and Data Needs identification process. The HC appreciates the proposed top-down approach of first identifying specific science and management challenges and prioritizing and organizing the research and data needs around those challenges. The four draft challenges and associated key topics presented in [D.3 Attachment 1](#) cover a range of fisheries and ecosystem issues, but include few habitat issues.

The staff guidance in the Situation Summary suggests up to 10 Challenges, so the HC recommends a fifth challenge that addresses the ongoing and emerging threats to habitat for fishery management plan (FMP) species, and the need for data to inform essential fish habitat (EFH) consultations and reviews, fisheries management, marine spatial planning, habitat impact assessments and habitat protections. Below is the HC's recommendation to create Challenge #5 with two initial topics. The HC also recommends a few edits to the existing proposed Challenges and Topics to highlight habitat-specific priority research needs. The HC had limited time at this meeting to consider this agenda item and looks forward to providing additional input at the next opportunity.

New Challenge 5. Fisheries habitat science and habitat conservation: Ongoing and emerging uses of marine, estuarine and freshwater resources impact FMP fisheries and their habitats. These pressures create additional challenges for management of all FMPs.

Topics:

1. Better understanding of distribution, habitat requirements, utilization and fish-habitat associations for all life stages of FMP species, coastwide to inform EFH and habitat area of particular concern designations, fisheries management, spatial planning and EFH impact assessments.
2. Better understand the impacts of non-fishing activities on the habitats of FMP species (e.g., offshore development proposals and related port developments, freshwater operations)

For the proposed challenges presented in Attachment 1, the HC recommends the following edits (**in bold**) to capture habitat-specific priority research needs:

Challenge #2. Fishery impact projections: Many Council-managed fisheries rely upon the projection of fishery impacts associated with trip limits, bag limits, season, areas, and other factors, **including impacts of fishing gears on habitat that lead to area closures**. These require research and data to inform a number of assumptions utilized in estimation.

New Topic for Challenge #2:

- **Evaluate the effect of fishing on habitat and the response of habitat to spatial closures**

New topic for Challenge #4:

- **Gain a better understanding of how climate change affects habitat functions and utilization by FMP species.**