

## GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the Marine Planning Committee (MPC) Report on Marine Planning ([Agenda Item D.2.a, MPC Report 1, June 2026](#)) and appreciates the MPC's continued diligence in tracking the wide range of activities that have the potential to affect Council-managed groundfish fisheries, fishing communities, and marine habitats along the West Coast. The issues outlined in the MPC report represent ongoing and emerging concerns that warrant careful Council attention.

### **GAP Support for MPC Recommendations**

The GAP endorses all of the MPC's recommendations and urges the Council to take the following actions:

- Establish a standing Marine Planning agenda item at June, November, and March Council meetings;
- Consult with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on offshore mining activities in the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone;
- Continue to support the MPC in tracking offshore oil and gas leasing, offshore mineral activities, the Ocean Rainforest kelp project, marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) developments, and relevant state marine planning efforts, including the Port of San Diego Shellfish and Seaweed Aquaculture Program;
- Request a briefing on PacFEM to support its application in Council decision-making; and
- Support development of an MPC-Habitat Committee (HC) comment letter template for use when comment timelines are compressed.

### **Pacific Ocean Observation Initiative Buoys**

As noted in the [HC Report 1 under Agenda Item F.1.a](#) and discussed under Marine Planning in the GAP at this meeting, the GAP is concerned about the potential loss of critical ocean observing infrastructure in the Pacific, including NOAA's Ocean Station Papa buoy and the Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI) buoy network. These systems provide long-term environmental, oceanographic and ecosystem data that support fisheries science, stock assessments, climate research and ecosystem research.

Of particular concern is the loss of Ocean Station Papa, one of the longest-running ocean observation sites in the North Pacific. The historical datasets collected at Papa provide an irreplaceable baseline for understanding ocean conditions, biological productivity, carbon cycling, marine heatwaves and ecosystem change. While individual research projects can deploy temporary monitoring equipment, decades of continuous observations cannot be recreated once lost.

The GAP notes that emerging ocean-use proposals, including the ExOIS ocean iron fertilization research program (discussed under the mCDR issue), have identified the Ocean Station Papa region as an important scientific reference area due to its extensive historical record and existing

observing infrastructure. The removal of the Papa buoy and other Pacific observing assets could reduce the ability of researchers, managers and stakeholders to evaluate the environmental effects of such projects, distinguish project impacts from natural variability and make informed decisions regarding ocean resource management.

The GAP encourages the Council to support continued operation and funding of Pacific Ocean observing systems and to communicate the importance of retaining these data streams to federal decision-makers.

### **Decommissioning Oil and Gas Platforms**

Decommissioning oil and gas platforms in California has the potential to impact some fisheries access and infrastructure within ports. We note the HC has been tracking this relative to fisheries habitats (See [HC Report 1, Agenda Item F.1.a, March 2026](#)), but suggest the MPC may want to also track decommissioning efforts as they relate to fisheries and port access.

PFMC  
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