

Follow-up to Pacific Fishery Management Council Questions and Comments on Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) Report

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) would like to continue to be informed on National Marine Sanctuaries Act 304(a)(5) guidance update and provide input when possible.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is working to revise the guidance to address PFMC comments as well as those of the other Regional Fishery Management Councils. NOAA gave an update at the May 2025 Council Coordination Committee meeting.

PFMC would like elaboration on what the planned outcome is for the Sanctuary Watch west coast NMS deep seafloor community tracker using groundfish trawl survey data. What would that product do?

Over the past decade, NOAA Fisheries scientists in the CCIEA program have contributed synthesized data and expert advice during the condition report process for each of the west coast sanctuaries. The time series figures derived from the groundfish trawl surveys within each sanctuary were used to assess the status and recent trends of focal resources (e.g., Dungeness crab, sunflower stars, rockfishes, flatfishes) in the deep seafloor habitats of each sanctuary. The purpose of the west coast NMS deep seafloor community tracker would be to annually reproduce this valuable suite of time series for each of the national marine sanctuaries to enable sanctuary managers, partners, advisors and other interested stakeholders to track how the status and trends of focal resources are changing. The deep seafloor tracker is being modeled after the [West Coast National Marine Sanctuaries Marine Heatwave Tracker](#).

PFMC would like an update on California sanctuaries' discussions with California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) on the state's 30x30 effort. Council member Marc Gorelnik understands there's been an effort by OPC to seek changes in sanctuary regulations in pursuit of the state's 30x30 efforts wherein the state appears to disagree with the federal government as to what counts in conserving biodiversity. Concern from PFMC's perspective is whether there would be any changes that would impact fishing activity. Sanctuaries have traditionally been protective of lawful fishing activity; concern is that there might be changes to that philosophy.

The ONMS West Coast Regional Office staff and the Chumash Heritage NMS (CHNMS) Acting Superintendent recently received an update from OPC on 30X30, learning that OPC would be recommending including CHNMS state waters as counting towards the state's 30X30 goal at its June 10 meeting, with recognition of the co-stewardship approach being taken. Under this revised definition of 30x30 Conservation Areas, California currently stands at 21.9% of coastal waters

conserved:

- State Marine Protected Area network: 546,000 acres (16.2%)
- Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary: 191,000 additional acres (5.7%)
- University of California Natural Reserves: 150 additional acres (<1%)
- [Roadmap to Achieving 30x30 in California's Coastal Waters](#)

NOAA is not currently planning changes to regulations as part of the joint Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary - Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary management plan review process. No other NMS in California are currently in the management plan review process, and NOAA is not considering changes to any NMS regulations in California at this time.

PFMC was interested in the information we presented on research related to deep-sea coral and the observation-based association of groundfish and the resulting economic value of those groundfish. The Council wants to know if we've also analyzed habitats that did not have coral and the associated groundfish in those areas, so we have a comparison.

The research focused on hard substrate habitats, not soft bottom substrates, although that would be a valuable future project.

PFMC would like to know if the Olympic Coast NMS draft management plan public comment period will overlap with a Council meeting; noting that the fewer quick response letters they have the better.

ONMS generally strives to align public comment periods with PFMC meetings whenever possible, although this is not always possible when under constraints outside of our control. We will update the Council as soon as we have a better idea of the OCNMS draft management plan publication date.