HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON COUNCIL OPERATIONS AND PRIORITIES

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) guidance to reduce the number of Council meetings with habitat issues on the agenda in 2026 by dropping the March or April Habitat Committee (HC) agenda item is understandable, but it comes with some potential issues. In particular, a large component of the HC's responsibility is to provide comments on behalf of the Council during open public comment periods of Federal/state policy or actions affecting habitat. The HC relies on Council guidance before moving forward with these comments. Given the sporadic frequency of these comment periods and their quick turnaround requirements, having the flexibility to get these in front of the Council during the Habitat agenda item at scheduled meetings has been advantageous to that process. Losing this flexibility at either the March or April meeting could reduce the efficiency of this process and may require the HC to seek approval from the Council using alternative options, such as the quick response process, outside of the scheduled Council meeting. Given these considerations, if one of the spring meeting's habitat agenda items needs to be dropped, the HC proposes removal of Habitat from the April meeting. Additionally, should the HC agenda item be dropped for April 2026, the HC suggests having one of our in-person meetings be the March meeting.

The HC continues to prefer meeting in-person, when possible, as in-person meetings remain the most effective way for the HC to operate. However, the HC recognizes the budgetary need for virtual meetings. The HC requests to be able to meet in-person a minimum of two times per year.

PFMC
11/17/2025