

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON CURRENT HABITAT ISSUES

The Habitat Committee (HC) is providing separate reports on ecosystem matters, salmon rebuilding plans, and Amendment 28 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan.

Deep Sea Coral Initiative

A report from the West Coast Deep Sea Coral Initiative workshop held last April is now available (<http://tinyurl.com/y2up6f8r>). The science plan is near completion.

Humboldt Aquaculture

Nordic Aquafarms, a Norway-based company with offices in Portland, Maine, has signed a three-year lease from the Humboldt Bay Harbor District, with a renewal option for a 30-50 year term, for a shoreside aquaculture facility in Humboldt Bay. Permit applications may be forthcoming and the species to be produced are yet to be determined. The facility would occupy the site of a former pulp mill, which has a ~1.5 mile outflow pipe seaward of the bay for effluent discharge. Nordic Aquafarms has estimated that up to 7 million gallons/day of partially treated wastewater would be discharged. If the project is permitted, it has the potential to be the largest aquaculture facility on the West Coast.

Dissolved Gas Levels

The states of Washington and Oregon are going through their processes to modify the allowable total dissolved gas (tdg) levels at dams for increased spill. Washington Department of Ecology closed its public comment period on Feb. 28th. Ecology proposed raising tdg levels to 120% tdg (as read in the tailrace) for 2019, and to 125% tdg in 2020. Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality is slated to change their tdg waiver from 120% tdg to 125% tdg in 2020. The HC has received many presentations demonstrating that 125% is optimal for outmigrating smolts.

Klamath & Trinity Water

The four lower Klamath dams are going through a reinitiation of consultation. Because they are still operating on a biological opinion from 2013, a number of tribes and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have filed suit against the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). An injunction has been filed requiring BOR to follow peer-reviewed recommendations to help prevent the fish disease *C. shasta*. One of the main recommendations is a deep flushing flow (10,000 cubic feet per second [cfs]) be released from Iron Gate Dam. This action has not been taken because the Department of Interior is rushing the new biological opinion so that it will be completed before the flushing window expires. This was given such a high priority that two people at U.S. Fish and Wildlife were deemed "essential" and were brought back to work on the biological opinion during the partial government shutdown. The anticipated completion date is April 1.

On the Trinity River, the Carr Fire damaged two power turbines at Trinity Dam. The contractor repairing the damage has completed repairs on the first turbine, but is behind schedule on the second. Each turbine can handle 1,800 cfs, and the combined 3,600 cfs is regularly exceeded during the spring dam release. This release is designed to mimic a snowmelt hydrograph. An order was sent through BOR to those developing the spring release not exceed 1,800 cfs until the second turbine is operational at the end of May. It is not clear who is responsible for this order, which would prevent the habitat benefits of the release to juvenile salmonids, as many will have already left the system. No information has been provided as to why the restriction is being imposed, since it has been routinely exceeded in the past. In addition to the directive being passed down through BOR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service be not allowed to propose any hydrographs which exceed 1,800 cfs until May 28th.

HC Election

The HC held its election for Chair and Vice Chair. Lance Hebdon will serve as chair and Correigh Greene will continue to serve as Vice Chair.

Next HC Meeting

At its April meeting, the HC will be discussing the National Marine Sanctuary Coordination Report, reintroduction of Chinook in essential fish habitat above Chief Joseph dam, and salmon rebuilding plans, among other issues. In addition, NOAA West Coast Regional Administrator Barry Thom has expressed interest in speaking with the HC about shared habitat priorities. If his schedule permits, this will occur in April.

PFMC

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