

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON CONSIDERATION OF FURTHER
PROTECTION OF CURRENTLY UNMANAGED FORAGE SPECIES

The Habitat Committee (HC) discussed protection of currently unmanaged forage species. The HC believes the Council should act proactively to protect forage fish that are not already under a fishery management plan before there is pressure to create a fishery for these species, especially given that there is already a large market for aquaculture feed and fish oil, and in light of the 2011 federal aquaculture policies that encourage the development and advancement of aquaculture in the U.S. Many Council-managed species, such as salmon and groundfish, rely on these unmanaged fish as forage.

The HC also believes it is important to choose a management option that minimizes the long-term workload for the Council while providing the Council with robust tools to provide adequate protection for these species.

If the Council can develop the rationale to put an expanded list of forage species under the coastal pelagic species (CPS) fishery management plan (FMP), then the CPS FMP could be an appropriate way to manage these species; as was done with the Council's prohibition on fishing for krill. However, some species might more appropriately be defined as forage for other FMP fisheries, or may interact with the gear in those fisheries. Therefore, an omnibus amendment that addresses forage species across multiple FMPs is another option to consider.

PFMC
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