

Pacific Fishery Management Council NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, June 16, 2005

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PACIFIC COUNCIL ADOPTS EXPANSIVE MARINE HABITAT PROTECTION MEASURES

The [Pacific Fishery Management Council](http://www.pcouncil.org) adopted expansive closures to commercial bottom trawl fishing Wednesday evening, by a unanimous 14 to 0 vote in front of a packed crowd at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Foster City, California. Their decision will protect about 200,000 square nautical miles of marine habitat on the West Coast between the Canadian and Mexican borders, amounting to over 75% of the ocean within United States jurisdiction off the coast of Washington, Oregon, and California.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the nation's pre-eminent fishery law. The Pacific Council voting membership includes commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing representatives, directors of state fish and wildlife agencies from California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The U.S. Coast Guard has a non-voting seat on the Council, as do the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, the State of Alaska, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. State Department. The Pacific Council is responsible for management of marine fisheries from 3–200 miles off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California.

The Council action, taken to protect the habitat of over 80 species of groundfish, was applauded by both environmental conservation organizations and fishing industry groups alike. Mr. Jim Ayres, Fisheries Conservation Director for Oceana, stated "This action will not only make things better for those dependent on current fisheries, but also provides security for future generations, as well. We have worked hard on this proposal for over five years, and this decision makes the money and time spent well worth it." Mr. Pete Leipzig, Director of Fishermen's Marketing Association, stated "The Council gave the fishing industry views a fair shake in this decision. We can now move forward with business plans for

productive fisheries. The seafood-consuming public will benefit from this decision.”

Mr. Brad Pettinger, Executive Director of the Oregon Trawl Commission, stated “The fishing industry and the coastal communities want to do what is necessary to protect the habitat and fish stocks for the long run. We have more at stake in this than anyone.”

The Pacific Council also acted to afford special protection for three marine sanctuaries in California—the Cordell Bank, Monterey Bay, and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuaries. In the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, the action provides for no-fishing marine reserves in a network of eight areas in waters three to six miles offshore. Ms. Marija Vojkovich, acting for the California Department of Fish and Game Director in this decision, said “This action, in combination with complimentary landing laws that the State of California will enact, will ultimately complete the network of marine reserves we envisioned in late 2003 with regard to fishing impacts. We expect that National Marine Sanctuary authorities will add the necessary protection from non-fishing impacts.”

In addition to closing areas to fishing, the Pacific Council took action to formally identify essential fish habitat for groundfish, establish habitat areas of particular concern for future management considerations, and institute research and monitoring mechanisms. “A tremendous amount of scientific and policy analysis was brought to bear for this decision,” said Mr. Steve Copps a senior policy analyst for the National Marine Fisheries Service. “The combination of a unanimous vote and broad support for habitat protection demonstrates the long process on this matter was effective and successful.”

Actions adopted by the Pacific Council will be incorporated in a final Environmental Impact Statement being completed by NMFS and implemented by May 2006. Details of the actions, including maps of the areas closed to bottom trawling, will be available on the Council website in the near future.