

## MBNMS Research Activity Panel Meeting Summary

**Host:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

**Date:** Friday, April 8<sup>th</sup> 2005

### **In Attendance:**

#### Members:

- Chris Harrold (Chair), Monterey Bay Aquarium
- Andrew DeVogelaere (RAP Coordinator), MBNMS
- Greg Cailliet, MLML
- Curt Storlazzi, USGS
- Churchill Grimes, NMFS
- Mary Yoklavich, NMFS
- Fiorenza Micheli, Hopkins Marine Station
- Charles Paull, MBARI
- Robin Tokmakian, NPS
- Kerstin Wasson, ESNERR
- Ellen Faurot-Daniels, CA Coastal Commission

#### Guests:

- Sean Van Sommeran, Pelagic Shark Research Foundation
- Steve Lonhart, MBNMS
- Cinamon Vann, PISCO Policy Coordinator
- Becky Stamski, MBNMS

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## DISCUSSION ITEM

### **Implementing the new *RAP Purpose and Protocols* (Chris Harrold)**

The new *RAP Purpose and Protocols* document (dated March 2005) was briefly reviewed. Chris and Andrew suggested that the first step in developing new membership is to give current RAP members the opportunity to step down for any reason, especially if they may not be able to meet the membership expectations set forth in the *Purpose and Protocols*. RAP members agreed with this idea, therefore Andrew DeVogelaere will be contacting members via email in the coming weeks to assess their desire to stay on the RAP. At that time, Andrew will also ask members who choose to stay on the RAP to categorize their expertise based upon the disciplines listed in the *Purpose and Protocols*, with the understanding that most members are multi-disciplinary. In addition, it was agreed that the change from 8 to 6 meetings per year would commence in 2006.

In reference to the *Purpose and Protocols*, RAP members requested that institutional diversity be a more prominent criterion. The suggestion was made that if members step down, someone could replace them with similar expertise at the same institution, if appropriate. Some members expressed concern that the “disciplines” by which the new RAP will be organized are too specific and unbalanced. A request was made to soften the language in the *Purpose and Protocols*, allowing for expansion of these disciplines as future needs arise.

RAP members are encouraged to email Chris Harrold (CHarrold@mbayaq.org) if they have further comments on the content and language of the *Purpose and Protocols* document. Any significant changes in this document would necessitate a re-evaluation by the SAC.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **Assessment of Essential Fish Habitat for West Coast Groundfish (Mary Yoklavich, NMFS)**

Mary gave an overview of the NMFS Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) EIS for west coast groundfish, including its history, methodology, results, and potential uses. The purpose of the EFH process is to minimize the extent of adverse effects of fishing on habitats through an integrated assessment of habitats, fish biology, and impacts. The draft EIS was completed in February and is now in public review (until May 2005); the full EIS can be downloaded at [http://www.pcouncil.org/groundfish/gfefheis/gfefheis\\_doc.html](http://www.pcouncil.org/groundfish/gfefheis/gfefheis_doc.html). The final EIS will be published in December 2005.

This is the first time an EFH study has been assessed at this level of detail, using new data sets, application of existing data sets and modeling. Outputs from the models identify Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). While basic habitat maps produced from this process are thorough, less information is available on specific biogenic habitats (e.g., kelp, seagrass, and structure-forming invertebrates) and important data gaps have been revealed.

Habitat use data was derived from the NMFS trawling surveys, with data gaps identified in southern California, for rocky habitats, and at shallow depths. To fill in these gaps, the Habitat Use Database (HUD) was created from scientific literature. The HUD is an extensive, relational database of habitat use by species and life stage and will be a useful product for regional planners and researchers.

Products from the study include "habitat suitability probability" maps, which allow predictive assessment of where a total of 156 species (including several life stages of single species) are likely to be. The effects of fishing on habitats, including sensitivity and recovery, in relation to effort are also incorporated. Maps of relative habitat sensitivity and recovery by gear type can be created from the database (e.g., areas that are more or less sensitive to bottom trawling).

A structure of alternatives has been created for the EIS, with many options for: EFH designation, HAPC designation, minimization of adverse impacts, and research and monitoring. Mary encourages RAP members to submit comments on the EIS to:

Mr. D. Robert Lohn, Regional Administrator, NMFS  
c/o Maryann Nickerson  
NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE, Bin C15700, Bldg 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0070  
Phone: 206-526-4490 Fax: 206.526.6426  
Email: GroundfishEFHDEIS.nwr@noaa.gov

Please submit before May 11<sup>th</sup> 2005 and put "Comment on 2005 Pacific Coast Groundfish DEIS" on subject line of your correspondence.

## DISCUSSION ITEM

### **Marine Protected Areas in California: Processes and Science Needs (Andrew DeVogelaere)**

The history of the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) was originally mandated in 1999 to design and improve a network of MPAs, with a central focus on marine biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, not commercial fisheries limitation. The MLPA was reinitiated in 2004 and mandates a statewide network by 2011, beginning with a pilot area along the central coast. The definition of the “central coast” is currently being delineated based on species breaks, habitats, and physical characteristics. The MLPA Science Team has many members from regional institutions and the RAP.

The MPA design will attempt to represent a range of habitats and depths, with one protected area for each major biogeographic region within state waters. The spacing, sizing and siting of MPAs will take into account recruitment, migration, and terrestrial influences. In addition, monitoring programs will be developed. See <http://www.mpa.gov> for more information on regional marine protected areas planning processes.

Andrew outlined the research components of the MBNMS Special MPAs Action Plan. The action plan calls for a “natural resource assessment,” the purpose of which is to understand the status and create a description of: resources, temporal trends, threats, and potential benefits of MPAs in the sanctuary. Literature reviews, expert interviews, and GIS mapping are being used to accomplish this assessment. The special MPA Action Plan team is also demonstrating data availability, creating support documents, and developing a decision support tool. The latter is an “on the fly” GIS tool that will allow groups of planners to interact with spatial and temporal data to best develop MPA boundaries. Mary Yoklavich recommended that MBNMS talk to the contractors used by NMFS for the EFH study, because they are developing a user-friendly GIS management tool as well.

Andrew also highlighted the MBNMS MPA research needs. He anticipates that RAP members will be contacted to provide information and contacts as these issues are addressed. The current research needs, and MBNMS staff contacts for each of these needs, include:

- 1) Natural Resource Assessment: science interviews (Erica); GIS data (Chad)
- 2) Support for Working Group: relay information to RAP by RAP members that sit on the MLPA Working Group
- 3) SIMoN website characterization and monitoring projects (Josh)
- 4) GIS Support: list of potential contractors/students (Chad)
- 5) Socioeconomic Impact Analyses: list of potential partners/contractors (Chad)
- 6) Support MPA needs through CeNCOOS: define an end user for this information
- 7) Circulation of MBNMS Strategy MPA-9 from the JMPR for future student theses and funding opportunities

## Sanctuary Currents Symposium Overview (Andrew DeVogelaere)

Andrew briefly discussed the successful March 12<sup>th</sup> Symposium and requested comments from the RAP, which included that there was not enough time for the policy panel discussion, and that the poster session was too crowded and brief. Further comments can be emailed to Andrew (Andrew.DeVogelaere@noaa.gov).

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### Past, Current, and Future Agenda Items

- Status of research permits in the sanctuary
- Update from John Stephens, Adjunct Professor at Cal Poly, on his southern MBNMS (Cambria) studies
- Status of the Ocean Observatory system (Church Grimes or Stephanie Watson)
- Update from the MLPA Science Team as this issue progresses
- ~~Implementation of the new RAP Purpose and Protocols~~
- ~~Marine reserves and MLPA update.~~