



MEMORANDUM

Item 5

TO: Ocean Protection Council
FROM: Valerie Termini
DATE: November 21, 2013
REGARDING: Fisheries summary

The November OPC meeting will highlight several fisheries project updates and a resolution that will provide guidance for a portion of the remaining OPC funds to be allocated to California fisheries issues. This memo serves as an overall summary to the many projects that will be addressed at the November meeting and role that the OPC can take moving forward.

- **Trawl Impact and Recovery Study**

The Trawl Impact and Recovery Study is part of a larger project, *The Central Coast Groundfish Project* which was funded in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and others to improve the environmental and economic performance of the groundfish fishery along the central coast of California. The trawl impact study was a collaborative fisheries research project and the first controlled study that measured the impacts of bottom trawling in soft-bottom habitats along the West Coast of the United States. The results of this study are designed to help inform management decisions about the level of intensity of trawl effort and appropriate habitats for trawling to minimize impacts to the benthic habitat.

- **Collaborative Fisheries Research West**

Collaborative fisheries research (CFR) involves creating partnerships among fisheries stakeholders (commercial and recreational fishermen, university scientists and fisheries scientists, coastal managers, NGOs, funders, and tribes) to encourage collaboration on fisheries research design, including defining goals and research questions, and to ensure that necessary data gathered in a manner that will improve fisheries management. The clear benefit of collaborative research is fishermen participating in the collection of data. In November 2010, the OPC authorized disbursement of up to \$1,500,000 to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) and the University of California Sea Grant Program to continue to build the organization and to fund the actual research projects.

- **Spiny Lobster FMP**

A spiny lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP) is currently being developed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) in collaboration with staff from the Fish and Game Commission (FGC) and the OPC. The development of an FMP for California spiny lobster is critically important at this time, to protect the resource and the existing level of effort in the commercial and recreational fishery. Additionally, this FMP might serve as a model for moving forward on future FMPs by building on a number of key actions the OPC has taken to advance the development of sustainable fisheries and fishing communities in California, including utilizing innovative partnerships to complete FMPs.

- **Marine Aquaculture Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)**

The Marine PEIR will be presented to the Fish and Game Commission at their December 11-12 meeting in San Diego, California. This document is the result of over 7 years of work from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, various staff from the OPC, and members of the Aquaculture Development Committee. Additionally, Ocean Science Trust conducted a scientific peer review of the report. The document seeks to provide guidance to a range of stakeholders that would be involved with any aquaculture project off the coast of California. The OPC staff further commit to using this PEIR as a tool for managing conflict and collaboration between various stakeholder groups interested in aquaculture expansion and development along the State's coast. This could include, for example, navigating potential conflicts as between commercial and recreational fisheries, bringing science to bear on possible environmental impacts associated with the cumulative activities in a region particularly suited for farming, and increased collaboration between state and federal government agencies responsible for permitting.

- **Rapid Assessments on California Fisheries**

The California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) is responsible for implementing AB 1217 (Monning), the California Sustainable Seafood Initiative (CSSI), which requires California to design and implement a voluntary sustainable seafood program that will highlight California's fisheries. Staff from the Ocean Science Trust was asked to conduct rapid assessments of 11 selected fisheries to help inform this program and ensures this program is based in the best available scientific information.

The rapid assessments synthesize existing scientific knowledge on eleven fisheries using the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) assessment tree as a framework. The eleven fisheries were selected by staff from the OPC, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), and the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC) based on considerations such as management interest, seasonal landings, economic value and likelihood of meeting sustainable seafood certification standards. The purpose of these rapid assessments is not to determine the sustainability of a fishery, but rather to provide a preliminary look at how much information is available about a fishery and to identify data gaps that need to be filled. The MSC framework used in rapid assessments provides a useful tool for this and can help managers identify critical research questions and potential fishery improvement projects.

- **Resolution Supporting the advancement of fisheries management and fishing communities**

The Ocean Protection Council's Strategic Plan identifies sustainable fisheries as a priority and highlights the importance of collaboration with other state agencies, such as the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) in the implementation of ocean and coastal laws and policies, such as the Marine Life Protection Act (MLMA). Effective implementation of such laws requires comprehensive scientific and organizational capacity. The DFW and the Commission have strong mandates consistent with the OPC's strategic plan, but resources and capacity to broadly implement these mandates are limited throughout these organizations.

Resilient coastal communities and healthy fisheries rely on innovative approaches that must be developed with a diverse set of partners to leverage resources and use the best available science to support and inform future fisheries policies. By promoting innovative, yet, practical approaches to shared priorities amongst stakeholders and governmental agencies, the OPC can be tactical in project development while supporting projects that improve the long-term health of fish stocks, marine resources, and economic opportunities in our coastal communities.