

Dear Coastal and Marine Habitat Partner,

The purpose of this e-mail is to inform you that, in mid-November, we will be reaching out to you and other stakeholders in California's commercial, recreation, research, conservation, government, tribal, and NGO communities to solicit input on a new NOAA habitat conservation strategy that is being piloted in California.

Habitat loss and degradation in our coastal and marine environments is a growing challenge because it has far-reaching impacts on a wide range of benefits that healthy coastal and marine habitats provide to the nation. These benefits include enhancing the sustainability of commercial and recreational fisheries, maintaining the ecological balance of predator/prey relationships, reducing the damage to coastal communities from storms and coastal flooding, and providing a variety of recreational and cultural opportunities to the public.

In response to this challenge, NOAA has recently launched a cross-agency strategy called the NOAA Habitat Blueprint. The Blueprint's purpose is to increase the effectiveness of habitat conservation efforts by strategically aligning partnerships and resources on a landscape/watershed scale, across NOAA programs, and most importantly, strengthening coordination and collaboration with external partners to meet targeted habitat objectives.

The first phase of this effort will identify one or more NOAA-wide habitat focus areas and associated objectives in each of the NOAA regions. As noted above, NOAA chose California as the region to pilot this selection process. NOAA regional staff is currently identifying candidate habitat focus areas in which we believe that more strategic collaboration between NOAA programs and partners can result in significant and measureable beneficial outcomes.

As a stakeholder who is familiar with California's coastal and marine habitats and the multiple ecosystem services that they support, we would like your input to inform the selection of the NOAA-wide focus area(s). **Look for our follow-up e-mail providing information on how you can review and provide your comments on the candidate areas.**

More information on the Blueprint, including a summary fact sheet and FAQs, can be found at: <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/habitatblueprint/>

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Dan Farrow, coordinator for the Habitat Focus Area component of NOAA's Habitat Blueprint at Dan.Farrow@noaa.gov (301-461-7262), or Nina Garfield, assistant coordinator, at Nina.Garfield@noaa.gov (301-563-1171).

Sincerely,

Dr. Kevin Chu

Deputy Regional Administrator

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National Marine Fisheries Service Co-chair of the California Pilot Regional Planning Team

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