



Contact: Jim Milbury/562-980-4006
Korie Schaeffer/707-575-6087

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NOAA Announces Public Meetings on California Eelgrass Mitigation Policy

NOAA's Fisheries Service is holding public meetings regarding a draft plan that will serve as a roadmap for avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating for impacts to eelgrass in bays, estuaries, and near-shore areas throughout California. Public meetings are planned for northern, central, and southern California, as follows:

Eureka, California

- Date: Friday, June 15, 2012
- Time: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
- Location: Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation, and Conservation District
Woodley Island Marina Meeting Room
601 Startare Drive

<http://www.humboldt-bay.org/woodleyislandmarina/directions/>

Long Beach, California

- Date: Tuesday, June 26, 2012
- Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
- Location: City of Long Beach
Council Chambers
545 Ocean Boulevard

Oakland, California

- Date: Wednesday, June 27, 2012
- Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
- Location: Port of Oakland
Exhibit Room (ground level)
530 Water Street

Eelgrass warrants a strong protection strategy because of the important biological, physical, and economic values it provides, as well as its importance to commercially and recreationally important fish species. NOAA Fisheries Service developed this policy to establish and achieve a goal of protecting this resource and its functions, including spatial coverage and density of eelgrass beds, throughout California. Further, it is the intent of this policy to ensure that there is no net loss of habitat functions.

The policy provides guidance to NOAA Fisheries Service staff and information to other federal agencies concerning avoidance and minimization measures, eelgrass survey methods, eelgrass impact assessment methods, and eelgrass impact mitigation. It is anticipated that the adoption and implementation of this policy will provide effective, statewide eelgrass protection and ensure that unavoidable impacts to eelgrass habitat are fully and appropriately compensated.

This draft mitigation policy has been published in the Federal Register for public comment. The public comment period closes at 5:00 p.m. on July 7, 2012. Electronic copies of this draft plan may be downloaded from the following internet site: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/hcd/>

On the Web:

Essential Fish Habitat: http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/hcd/HCD_webContent/EFH/index_EFH.htm

Eel Grass News Release (March 12, 2012):

http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/media/press_release_CA_Eelgrass_Mitigation_Policy_draft_milbury_v1.pdf