

GROUND FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Situation: The Council has been briefed on the NMFS decision to develop a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) that will analyze alternatives for designating EFH and minimizing the adverse effects of fishing on EFH. The NMFS project manager for the EFH SEIS will brief the Council on progress to date and discuss a timeline for SEIS development. The progress report will focus on the development of a geographic information system (GIS) that will be used to evaluate EIS alternatives.

NMFS requests the Council to appoint a technical committee to guide a contractor in the development and completion of an assessment of groundfish habitat. The committee would review the GIS and other data that would be the inputs into the assessment as well as an analytical framework that will serve as the assessment model. This strategy is consistent with the groundfish EFH decision tree that was presented to the Council in April. Members would come from Council advisory bodies and outside organizations with expertise in marine habitat. NMFS will also describe how this committee will work with the Habitat Committee. Along with the aforementioned GIS, these efforts form the basis for developing the alternatives that will be evaluated in the EIS.

Council Task:

1. **Discuss and provide guidance to NMFS on further development of the Groundfish EFH SEIS.**

Reference Materials:

1. EIS Timeline, (Exhibit G.8, Supplemental Attachment 1).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. Council Guidance on the EFH EIS Process

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Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan (GFSP) Consistency Analysis

The GFSP broadly supports effective public involvement during and beyond the transition to sustainable groundfish fishery management. The GFSP supports protection, maintenance, and/or recovery of habitats necessary for healthy and productive fish populations (Sec. II.A.(b)7). The EFH SEIS will examine options and establish a management framework consistent with these GFSP goals.

PFMC
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