

GROUND FISH BYCATCH PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Situation: In 2001 NMFS announced its intention to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The scope of this EIS has undergone two important changes and the initial draft EIS currently before the Council focuses on bycatch reduction. At the June meeting, Mr. Jim Glock briefed the Council on this narrowing of the scope and presented a revised set of alternatives. The Council approved the narrowed scope and revised alternatives during that agenda.

An initial draft EIS is presented for Council consideration. The economic analysis of the alternatives has not been completed but is expected before the November Council meeting. If the Council is satisfied with the scope and content of the analysis, they should approve this initial draft for public review. This review is part of the Council process. NMFS plans to publish a draft EIS (DEIS) in early 2004, which will be subject to an additional public comment period required by the National Environmental Policy Act. The Council also may make recommendations for revisions to the initial draft.

The Council is not required to identify a preferred alternative at this meeting, although doing so would facilitate public review of the initial draft. If the Council defers at this meeting, it would be important to choose a preferred alternative at the November meeting, in advance of DEIS publication.

Council Action:

- 1. Approve Groundfish Bycatch Program initial draft EIS document for public review.**
- 2. Consider identifying the Council-preferred alternative.**

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit C.9, Attachment 1: West Coast Groundfish Bycatch Program Environmental Impact Statement - Initial Public Review Draft.
2. Exhibit C.9, Attachment 2: Appendix A. Biological Environment: Distribution, Life History, and Status of Relevant Species (*Electronic copy on CD-ROM, enclosed separately*).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Approve initial draft EIS for Public Review

Kit Dahl
Jim Glock

PFMC
08/25/03