



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

OCT 13 2006

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, we enclose for your review the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Proposed Acceptable Biological Catch and Optimum Yield Specifications and Management Measures for the 2007-2008 Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery and Amendment 16-4, Rebuilding Plans for Seven Depleted Pacific Groundfish Species (FEIS).

The FEIS evaluates the periodic specification of a level of groundfish harvest in waters off the states of Washington, Oregon, and California that will provide the greatest overall benefit to the nation, or optimum yield, within a framework established by the *Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan*. Fisheries subject to management measures include limited entry trawl fisheries, limited entry fixed gear (pot and longline) fisheries, and a variety of other fisheries catching groundfish, either as target species or incidentally, but not license limited under the management framework established in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. Allocations to tribal fisheries off Washington State are also identified. Seven groundfish species are currently declared overfished and measures to prevent overfishing and rebuild these overfished stocks are a central element of this action. Rebuilding plans for these species, which establish targets for long-term recovery, are re-evaluated and revised as part of the action. In order to constrain fisheries to harvest limits consistent with revised rebuilding plans, stock assessments and the management framework in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan, management measures for commercial and recreational fisheries are identified. Management measures considered for commercial fisheries include two-month cumulative landing limits for species, species groups, and geographic subunits for different regulatory sectors of the groundfish fishery. Management measures considered for recreational fisheries include bag limits, size limits, and fishing seasons; which vary by state. In addition, area closures based on depth and intended to reduce bycatch of depleted species apply to both commercial and recreational fisheries that are likely to catch these species. These closures vary by geographic area and time of year.

Additional copies of the FEIS may be obtained from the Pacific Fishery Management Council Office, 7700 NE Ambassador Pl., Ste 101, Portland, OR 97220, 503-820-2280. Please specify when requesting if you would prefer a paper copy of the document, otherwise a CD may be provided. The document is also accessible electronically through the Council website at <http://www.pcouncil.org>.

Comments or questions on this document submitted during the agency's 30-day review period for the FEIS must be received by November 20, 2006. Written comments should be submitted by mail to: Robert Lohn, Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, BIN C15700, Seattle, WA



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98115-0070. Comments may be submitted by facsimile (fax) to 206-526-6736. Electronic comments may be submitted by e-mail to gf07-08spex.nwr@noaa.gov; include in the comment subject line the following document identifier: 0708 GF SPEX EIS. A copy of your comments should be submitted to me by mail to NOAA's Office of Program Planning and Integration (PPI), SSMC3, Room 15603, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910; by fax to 301-713-0585; or by e-mail to nepa.comments@noaa.gov.

NOAA is not required to respond to comments received as a result of issuance of the FEIS. However, comments received will be reviewed and considered for their impact on the issuance of a publicly available Record of Decision (ROD) following final agency action.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rodney Weiher". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely".

Rodney F. Weiher, Ph.D.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator