

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE GROUND FISH  
ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT SYNTHESIS REPORT AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Drs. Michelle McClure, Waldo Wakefield and Ole Shelton (NWFSC) briefed the SSC regarding the Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat Synthesis Report. The report provides a useful synthesis of available information regarding groundfish habitat distributions, species-habitat associations, fishing and non-fishing stressors, fishing pressure, and prey species for Pacific groundfish.

The SSC considers the information contained in the Synthesis Report to be sufficient for purposes of initiating a request for proposals (RFP). However, the SSC has two concerns. First, non-fishing stressors are represented by 16 human activities summarized into a single indicator. Given the diversity of these stressors (e.g., pollution, beach use, commercial shipping activity), the SSC recommends that those stressors specifically relevant to groundfish be analyzed individually in the report and not combined. Second, the SSC is unable to comment on the methods underlying the Report, as the Appendices (which provide documentation of these methods) were not available for review until this meeting.

For purposes of evaluating proposals received under the RFP, it may be helpful to consider the objectives of the Council with regard to essential fish habitat (EFH) and the effectiveness of existing EFH conservation areas in meeting those objectives.

While EFH designation *per se* does not affect fishing activity, it can serve as a basis for future regulatory action. Maps depicting the distribution of catch and ex-vessel value by location and species would be a useful starting point for analyzing the socioeconomic effects of regulatory actions that may occur as a result of changes in EFH designation. While it may not be feasible to develop maps in time for the RFP, it would be useful to have such maps available if and when EFH regulatory actions are considered by the Council.

PFMC

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