

GROUND FISH ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT REVIEW

The 5-year periodic review of groundfish essential fish habitat (GFEFH) is scheduled to begin in 2011. To prepare for that process, the Council should review and modify the schedule and procedures outlined in Council Operating Procedure (COP) 22 to help guide the ad hoc Groundfish EFH Review Committee (EFHRC). Council staff has drafted a modified COP 22 for Council consideration (Agenda Item I.1.a, Attachment 1), which addresses both the substance and schedule for the periodic review. Specifically, the Council should consider the following issues:

1. **The scope of issues in the review.** Section 7.6 of the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan requires "...review the EFH description and identification, HAPC designations, and information on fishing impacts and nonfishing impacts...". There are currently two proposals pending for modification of Ecologically Important Habitat Closed Areas (Eel Canyon and Olympic 2/Grays Canyon); proposals for other modifications should be solicited. In addition to proposals from outside entities, the Council will also need to consider corrections to current EFH description, identification of new information, and emerging threats to EFH.
2. **The role and composition of the EFHRC.** Depending on the scope of issues to be addressed, the EFHRC could serve strictly as a review body, or as a workgroup to develop information and proposals.
3. **Staffing and funding necessary to accomplish the review.** Depending on the role identified for the EFHRC, agencies should consider staff available to accomplish the tasks, or if outside contractors would be necessary. For example, if modeling similar to that used to describe GFEFH in Amendment 19 was necessary.
4. **Schedule and process for completing the review.** The time necessary to complete the review will depend on a number of factors, including the scope of issues to be addressed and the number of proposed changes received and advanced to the review process. Attachment 2 includes two timelines for Council consideration and includes a proposed EFHRC meeting in December to provide EFHRC recommendations on the process and the scope of potential changes. The final determination of the process and schedule would occur in March or April after the benefit of the EFHRC input. The administrative process necessary to incorporate any changes in the fishery management plan should be discussed, but will not be ripe for decision at this stage. Issues may include whether to integrate changes in the specification process or to pursue a separate amendment process.
5. **Near term objectives and activities of the EFHRC.** Depending on Council input on the review schedule and role of the EFHRC, it may be necessary to schedule EFHRC meetings, Council agenda time, and solicit proposals between the September 2010 and April 2011 Council Meetings as indicated in Attachment 2.

Council Action:

1. **Provide preliminary direction for the GFEFH review process, including the initial schedule for completion of review and implementation of modifications.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item I.1.a, Attachment 1: COP 22 – Draft Proposed Changes to Council Operating Procedure 22, Process for Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat Review and Modification.
2. Agenda Item I.1.a, Attachment 2: Proposed Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Review Process and Schedule.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Discuss and Initiate Planning for the Five Year Review

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