

GROUND FISH FMP ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS

Situation: The Council has been briefed on the NMFS decision to develop two Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (SEISs) to (1) analyze programmatic alternatives for West Coast groundfish management and (2) analyze alternatives for designating and protecting essential fish habitat (EFH). The programmatic SEIS (PSEIS) will review the current status of the federal groundfish management program, condition of the groundfish resource, and the socioeconomic conditions of the fishery. The PSEIS will examine a range of future policy alternatives and implementation options, including provisions in the Council's Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan (GFSP). The EFH SEIS will examine options for designating EFH as well as minimizing the adverse effects of fishing on EFH. The NMFS project managers for these respective SEISs will brief the Council on progress to date and discuss a timeline for SEIS development (Exhibit E.6, Attachment 1).

The relevant Council advisors will review the Attachments and provide initial comments to the Council at this meeting. The timeline calls for Council adoption of the PSEIS alternatives for analysis at the June 2002 meeting. The alternatives will form the basis for an amendment to the groundfish fishery management plan.

The Council should consider tasking the EIS oversight committee with relevant assignments to further Council input and take advantage of opportunities made available by this effort.

Council Task:

1. **Discuss and provide guidance to NMFS on developing the Groundfish Programmatic SEIS and the SEIS for Essential Fish Habitat.**

Reference Materials:

1. Timeline and Major Milestones for Two Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements on Pacific Coast Groundfish (Exhibit E.6, Attachment 1).
2. Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Draft Proposed Alternatives Matrix (Exhibit E.6, Attachment 2).
3. Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Draft Purpose and Need (Exhibit E.6, Attachment 3).
4. Draft Management Tools/Effects Matrix (Exhibit E.6, Attachment 4).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview/Programmatic EIS
- b. EFH EIS
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. Council Discussion and Guidance

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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 also specifically seeks to update the goals and objectives in the current groundfish FMP to incorporate GFSP visions and goals (Sec. II.C.(d)3). The Programmatic SEIS will provide a public forum vehicle for assessing and incorporating GFSP visions and goals into the Groundfish FMP. The GFSP also seeks protect, maintain, and/or recover those habitats necessary for healthy fish populations and the productivity of those habitats (Sec. II.A.(b)7). The EFH SEIS will examine options and establish a management framework consistent with these GFSP goals.

Supplemental Reference Materials

5. Table => One Example of How Matrix Could be Filled In (Exhibit E.6, Supplemental Attachment 4a).
6. Exhibit E.6.c, Supplemental GAP Report.
7. Exhibit E.6.c, Supplemental SSC Report.