

GROUND FISH PROGRAMMATIC ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT  
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Situation: NOAA Fisheries, in consultation with the Council, is preparing a Programmatic EIS (PEIS) that will review the current status of the federal groundfish management program and offer a range of alternative management strategies at a broad programmatic or policy level. This PEIS was initiated with a scoping process early in 2001 and was intended in part to continue the development and implementation of Council's strategic plan for groundfish. Since the strategic plan was adopted, and the EIS scoping period held, groundfish management has changed substantially, with the focus towards how to allow fishing while achieving the stock rebuilding mandate. At the June 2002 meeting, NOAA Fisheries recommended the Council delay adoption of the alternatives due to concerns they may no longer provide a range of realistic and reasonable alternatives; the Council agreed.

NOAA Fisheries would like to discuss this situation with the Council and develop a plan for moving forward. Some of the specific topics might include the role of the PEIS in the strategic planning process, whether to reopen the public scoping process, review and possible revision of the current programmatic alternatives, preparation of an FMP amendment to accompany the PEIS, and coordination with other agency activities and priorities.

The Ad Hoc Groundfish FMP EIS Oversight Committee met in May 2002 and developed five programmatic alternatives, each focusing on different policy goals. The Council could direct the EIS Oversight Committee to assist in scoping and the revision of the PSEIS alternatives.

Council Task:

1. **Discuss and provide guidance to NOAA Fisheries on a process and schedule for revising PSEIS alternatives.**

Reference Materials:

- ~~1. None.~~

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. Council Guidance on EIS Process

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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.

1. *Exhibit C6.c, Supplemental GAP Report.*

PFMC  
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