

GROUND FISH ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK—FISHING GEAR IMPACT MODEL COMPONENT

Situation: Since early 2003 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has been developing a comprehensive risk assessment methodology to support the development of an environmental impact statement (EIS) evaluating: (1) the designation of essential fish habitat (EFH) for species in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and (2) measures to mitigate impacts to EFH. The major component of the methodology is an analytical framework, which consists of several components organized within a geographic information system (GIS). At the April 2004 meeting, the Council reviewed and approved for use the EFH designation component of the analytical framework. The second component of the analytical framework is the fishing impacts model, which provides a quantitative assessment of the biological impacts to EFH caused by bottom trawl fishing gear. (Exhibit C.4.b, Attachment 1, describes this fishing impacts model component. Exhibit C.4.b, Attachment 2, which is in electronic format on CD-ROM, contains the appendices to this document.) In conjunction with other information, this model can be used to evaluate different mitigation measures, which may be proposed in the EIS, to reduce impacts to EFH.

The Groundfish and Economics Subcommittees of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) met May 24-25, 2004, in Seattle to review the fishing impacts model component of the analytical framework. They have reported their recommendations to the full SSC. Based on the Subcommittee report, the SSC will advise the Council as to a decision to use the fishing impacts model component to evaluate the alternatives that will be included in the EFH EIS. During this agenda item the EFH EIS project team will also report to the Council on the current status of the impact model.

At the April meeting the Council also authorized the Ad Hoc Groundfish FMP EIS Oversight Committee to develop alternatives for the EFH EIS. Two meetings have been tentatively scheduled, one in July and one in August. During these meetings the Oversight Committee will develop EFH designation alternatives and impact mitigation alternatives, including options to designate habitat areas of particular concern (HAPCs). At the September 2004 meeting, the Council would then review and approve their use as the preliminary range of alternatives to be evaluated in the EFH EIS. The Council is scheduled to identify preferred alternatives at the November 2004 meeting, to conform to the current court-mandated schedule, which requires release of a draft EIS for public comment in early 2005 (Exhibit C.4.b, Attachment 3).

Council Action:

Consider approval of the fishing gear impact component of the analytical framework and establish the meeting schedule for the Ad Hoc Groundfish FMP EIS Oversight Committee.

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit C.4.b, Attachment 1: EFH Impacts Assessment for the Pacific Groundfish FMP.
2. Exhibit C.4.b, Attachment 2: Appendices to the EFH Impacts Assessment (electronic copy on CD-ROM).
3. Exhibit C.4.b, Attachment 3: EFH Timeline (Revised May 2004).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. NMFS Report
- c. SSC Report
- d. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- e. Public Comment
- f. **Council Action:** Approve use of the Fishing Gear Impact Component of the Analytical Framework and Establish the Meeting Schedule for the Ad Hoc Groundfish FMP EIS Oversight Committee.

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