

GROUND FISH ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT AND ROCKFISH CONSERVATION AREA UPDATE

At its April 2015 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) narrowed the scope of actions to be considered within the groundfish essential fish habitat (EFH) and trawl rockfish conservation areas (RCA) package. The Council affirmed the expectation that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and Council project team will develop a range of alternatives to be considered at the September 2015 meeting.

The Council also requested for the June 2015 meeting, a NMFS report that identifies the appropriate authority for rulemaking for the issues that will be advanced, and an update and preliminary description of the collaborative proposal being developed by the informal stakeholder group. NMFS has also prepared a report on potential pathways for addressing the area modifications that were excluded from the scope of EFH and RCA action (see Agenda Item D.1.a, NMFS Report 3).

The Council requested that NMFS develop groundfish fishing intensity maps that reflect a more recent timeframe and post-trawl individual fishing quota (IFQ) program implementation (2011-2014), and a synthesis of the proposals that were submitted in 2013. No timeframe was prescribed for those mapping products, but project team members are working with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center to generate those products in a timely manner, to support development and analysis of alternatives.

At the June meeting, the Council should consider the regulatory pathways report (Agenda Item D.6.a, NMFS Report), and a report from the collaborative stakeholder group (expected as supplemental public comment), and may provide guidance.

Council Action:

- 1. Consider NMFS report on regulatory authorities.**
- 2. Consider preliminary descriptions of the collaborative stakeholder proposal.**
- 3. Provide guidance on development of a range of alternatives, as appropriate.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item D.6.a, National Marine Fisheries Service Report.
2. Agenda Item D.6.b, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- D.6 Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat and Rockfish Conservation Area Update Kelly Ames, Kerry Griffin
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. Council Guidance