

AMENDMENT TO MODIFY GROUND FISH ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT AND TO ADJUST ROCKFISH CONSERVATION AREAS

At its April 2015 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) established the scope of action for consideration of changes to Pacific Coast groundfish essential fish habitat (EFH) and trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCA), and asked the project team to present a range of alternatives (ROA) at the September 2015 meeting. The proposed ROA for EFH-related subject areas is Agenda Item H.8, Attachment 1, and the ROA for RCA adjustments is Agenda Item H.8, Attachment 2.

Range of Alternatives

There are ten total alternatives (nine in the EFH ROA document and one in the trawl RCA document), with sub-alternatives nested in each alternative:

1. EFH Closed Areas (EFHCA)
2. Public Proposals
3. Habitats within the existing trawl RCA
4. RCA Changes
5. Appendix B (Life history summaries, prey species, etc.)
6. Appendix D (Non-fishing impacts)
7. Information and Research Needs
8. Review and Revision process
9. Appendix C Part 2 (Fishing impacts)
10. Clarifications and Corrections

For Alternatives 1-4, the sub-alternatives are arranged to represent those sub-alternatives that are relatively less protective of benthic habitats and groundfish (and therefore offering greater fishing opportunities) to those sub-alternatives that are relatively more protective of benthic habitat and groundfish (and therefore offering fewer fishing opportunities). Alternatives 5-10 are “either-or” alternatives, meaning the Council would choose either the No Action sub-alternative, or the single action sub-alternative. The Council will still have an opportunity to consider and provide guidance on those action sub-alternatives at the April 2016 meeting.

At this meeting, the Council should indicate which sub-alternatives should be further analyzed and included in the suite of alternatives to be considered at the April 2016 meeting. Based on Council guidance, the project team will develop a suite of distinct alternatives for analysis and consideration by the Council at its November 2015 meeting.

Tribal Usual and Accustomed Areas

Several existing and potential EFHCAs and RCAs are located within Tribal Usual and Accustomed Areas (U&As) off the Washington Coast. At the April 2015 meeting, the Council passed a motion stating that the implementation of any EFH changes affecting Tribal U&As would be subject to government consultation between National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the affected tribe or tribes. Similarly, government consultation may be necessary

for RCA changes recommended by the Council. Therefore, any Council recommendations would only be implemented by NMFS after government-to-government consultation with the affected Tribes.

Collaborative Proposal

At the April 2015 meeting, the Council also requested that the project team keep a placeholder for a proposal from a collaborative group of nongovernmental organizations and industry stakeholders who have been developing a consensus-based proposal for revisions to closed bottom trawl areas. This draft proposal is included as Agenda Item H.8.b, Public Comment 1.

Next Steps

The Council should provide guidance on priority habitats and on which combination of alternatives and sub-alternatives should be analyzed and developed into a suite of integrated alternatives, for consideration at the April 2016 Council meeting.

Council Action:

- 1. Consider priority habitats and provide guidance.**
- 2. Adopt range of alternatives and sub-alternatives for analysis.**
- 3. Provide guidance on preferred sub-alternatives.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.8, Attachment 1: Draft Range of EFH Alternatives.
2. Agenda Item H.8, Attachment 2: Draft Range of RCA Alternatives.
3. Agenda Item H.8, Attachment 3: Trawl Survey CPUE Analysis.
4. Agenda Item H.8, Attachment 4: IFQ Hotspot Analysis.
5. Agenda Item H.8.a, NWFSC Report.
6. Agenda Item H.8.b, Public Comment 1.
7. Agenda Item H.8.b, Public Comment 2.

Agenda Order:

- H.8 Amendment to Modify Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat and
to Adjust Rockfish Conservation Areas Kerry Griffin, Kelly Ames
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt a Range of Alternatives for Analysis

PFMC
08/21/15