

Agenda Item G.8.a
Supp NMFS PPT 2
March 2016



NOAA
FISHERIES

West Coast Region

Gear Changes

*in the Groundfish Fishery's
Trawl Catch Share Program*

Agenda Item G.8
NMFS Report
Issues for Consideration

March 2016

Why an EIS?

These gear changes:

- May negatively impact some ESA-listed species, including salmon and eulachon, from changing mesh size, changing codend restrictions, and eliminating selective flatfish trawl gear
- May impact stock productivity for many species if changing the trawl mesh size or removing codend restrictions causes smaller fish to be harvested
- May increase uncertainty in total mortality estimates for all species from allowing multiple gears to be fished during a trip

Proposed action may have significant impacts on the environment → EIS

Additional potentially significant impacts may be identified during EIS scoping, drafting

Notice of Intent to Prepare EIS

- NOI published March 3 and invites comments thru April 4, 2016. (Supp. Att. 3)
- Informs public of upcoming analysis, describes how they can become involved, and determines the scope of issues and range of alternatives for the EIS.
- **March Council meeting is a scoping meeting.**
- NMFS invites comment to ensure that the full range of issues related to gear changes in the Trawl Catch Share Program are identified. NMFS is specifically inviting comments on the proposed alternatives. In addition, NMFS invites comments on the potential impacts of these alternatives and further details of how fishermen are likely to operate under these alternatives. For example, NMFS invites comments on the potential impacts of the alternatives given changes being considered by the Council on electronic monitoring, essential fish habitat, and rockfish conservation areas.
- *Email comments to groundfish.gearEIS@noaa.gov*

EIS data & analysis in development



Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to provide more flexibility in the configuration and use of gear for participants in the trawl rationalization program, while at the same time ensuring that conservation objectives are met. Such flexibility is expected to foster innovation and allow for more optimal harvest operations. Benefits may include increased efficiency through reduced costs and increased revenues.

The need for this action is to better use the individual accountability now in place for participants in the trawl rationalization program in order to more fully achieve the expected benefits of the program. Pre-trawl rationalization regulations that managed the fleet as a whole may need to be updated or may no longer be appropriate for managing individuals operating under the incentives provided in the rationalized portion of the Pacific groundfish fishery. With the resource allocated to individuals or cooperatives, with 100 percent monitoring, and with individuals or cooperatives held accountable for the consequences of their decisions, participants would be allowed some additional flexibility in determining where to fish and with what gear, through relaxed restrictions on trawl gear configuration and gear use.

- Working with Council staff, may edit during EIS scoping process and before draft EIS publishes for public review.

Input on Select Alternatives

- **Alternatives with uncertainty (A3, C2, E3, F3)**
Recommend the Council consider the risks associated with the uncertainty, including whether and how to mitigate the uncertainty.
- **Mesh Size Alternatives A2 & A3** -
A2 – 3"?; A3 - consider risks, could monitor or mitigate
- **SFFT Alternative D3**
consider risks, could monitor or mitigate
- **Chafing Gear Alternative E3**
Consider impacts of increased access to rocky areas (EFH/RCA)
- **Multiple Gears Alternative F3**
Requires increased monitoring. Sorting sub-option B reduces data quality.
- **Multiple Areas Alternative G2**
Catch sorted by IFQ area for catch accounting. Requires increased monitoring.
- **Stowing Alternative H2**
NMFS clarified no mixing of hauls before observer samples. With EM, may require increased monitoring/video review.

Delay FPA → Select PPA

NMFS Report 1 recommends the Council delay selection of a Final Preferred Alternative (FPA) on these gear changes until the Council, its advisory bodies (SSC, GMT, GAP, GEMPAC, GEMTAC, others?), and NMFS have more carefully considered the trade-offs between the gear action, the electronic monitoring action, and the EFH/RCA action.

Instead, select PPA to signal where Council headed and to allow more input from the public and Council advisory bodies.

Estimated Schedule

- September 2015 – Adopt purpose and need statement and range of alternatives
- November 2015 – Analysis update
- March/June 2016 - Select a final preferred alternative (FPA)
- Summer 2016 – Proposed rule and draft EIS for public review
- November/December 2016 – Final EIS, Record of Decision, final rule publishes
- Early 2017 - Target implementation

FMP Amendment?

- Several sections in the FMP refer to trawl gear.
- Depending on the Council's FPA, some sections of the FMP may need updated.
- NMFS and Council staff, in coordination with NOAA GC, will continue their evaluation of the FMP to determine what changes may be required.
- For example, Section 6.6.1.2 has a descriptive history that could be updated through an FMP Amendment with this action or a later action.

Next Steps

EIS

- Scoping of alternatives and issues thru April 4, 2016 (NOI)
- Potential changes to Purpose and Need, as needed
- Complete draft EIS for public review (summer 2016)

Action

- FMP Amendment?
- Consider delay of FPA (June 2016?)
 - If so, could select PPA and schedule FPA under Future Council Agenda planning
 - If not, see FPA decision template

Questions?