

## GROUND FISH ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT AND ROCK FISH CONSERVATION AREA AMENDMENT

At its September 2015 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) established the range of alternatives (ROA) for potential changes to Pacific Coast groundfish essential fish habitat (EFH) and trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs); and asked the Project Team to provide a progress report in April 2016. The Council also asked (in November 2015) for a preliminary set of alternatives to be presented in April 2016, with the possibility of revising the ROA and/or selecting a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA).

The EFH/RCA Project Team Report (Agenda Item F.5.a) provides the suite of 40 alternatives, describes the proposed approach for analyzing the Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area (EFHCA) and RCA alternatives, and provides progress updates for both the EFHCA and the RCA alternatives development. The alternatives have been written to reflect Council action in September 2015. This includes establishing sideboards on the ROA, removing from consideration any alternatives that are within state waters, and providing corollary alternatives that exclude any modifications within Tribal Usual and Accustomed Areas (U&As) off Washington.

The Project Team Report describes the suite of alternatives in 10 distinct subject areas. Four subject areas address fishery management actions, with six classified as administrative actions:

Fishery management alternatives:

1. EFHCA changes contained in public proposals (including the Collaborative proposal)
2. New EFHCAs within current RCA boundaries
3. Adjustments to the trawl RCA
4. Use of MSA Sec. 303(b) discretionary authorities in waters deeper than 3500m

Administrative alternatives:

5. Life history descriptions, EFH descriptions, and major prey items (FMP Appendix B)
6. Fishing gear effects (FMP Appendix C Part 2)
7. Non-fishing effects and conservation measures (Appendix D )
8. Information and Research Needs
9. Review and Revision Process
10. Clarifications and Corrections

The Project Team Report summarizes the progress made on the EFHCA and RCA changes, and includes several tables summarizing spatial and socioeconomic information relevant to the seven public proposals (which includes the Collaborative proposal). The Collaborative group submitted shapefiles to the Project Team, and we anticipate a final narrative proposal will be submitted in supplemental Briefing Book materials.

The Council is asked to consider the alternatives as presented; provide feedback on the proposed analytical metrics; and consider the analytical approach to both the EFHCA and RCA actions. The Council is also asked to consider the workload associated with analyzing the alternatives, and either revise the ROA to be narrower, or consider extending the timeline associated with the amendment package.

In addition, the Council and Advisory Bodies are asked to comment on the proposed approach for RCA management under Alternative 3d in the Project Team Report. This Alternative proposes to utilize existing groundfish management lines for discrete closures, should the need arise to implement in-season or pre-season management measures for groundfish.

Finally, the Council is asked to consider the workload associated with analyzing the 40 alternatives, and consider a possible revised timeline associated with the amendment package. The Council is scheduled to consider the alternatives and associated analyses, to select a PPA in September 2016, and take final action in November 2016.

**Council Action:**

1. **Consider the proposed analytical approach.**
2. **Consider and Revise Range of Alternatives.**
3. **Identify PPA if possible.**
4. **Provide Additional Guidance.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.5.a, Project Team Report.
2. Agenda Item F.5.c, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

F.5 Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat and Rockfish  
Conservation Area Amendment

- a. Project Team Report Kerry Griffin
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities John Stadler, Kerry Griffin
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Consider and Revise Range of Alternatives, as Appropriate; Identify Preferred Alternatives if Possible; Provide Additional Guidance as Necessary.

PFMC  
03/22/16