

## DRAFT COUNCIL OPERATING PROCEDURE 22: PROCESS FOR ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT REVIEW AND MODIFICATION

### PURPOSE

To guide the Council's review and modification of essential fish habitat (EFH) provisions in FMPs, including identification and description of EFH, fishing and non-fishing impacts, recommended conservation measures, habitat areas of particular concern, and other provisions of EFH.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure that the EFH provisions in the Council's FMPs are consistent with the best scientific information available.
2. To ensure a meaningful, efficient, and transparent process for review of new information, and consideration of any potential changes to EFH provisions.

### EFH PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS

No more than five years after completing a review and any modifications of an FMP's EFH provisions, the Council may initiate a new review and evaluation of published and unpublished scientific literature and reports, information from interested parties, and previously unavailable or inaccessible data. The Council will identify the appropriate Council and/or National Marine Fisheries Service staff lead(s) to coordinate the review, working with subject area experts, Council Advisory Bodies, and others to complete a review consistent with Federal regulatory guidance at 50 CFR 600, Subpart J.

In determining the scope and schedule of the review, the Council should consider recommendations from prior reviews, clearly identify the purpose and objectives for the review, and solicit input from its Advisory Bodies.

As appropriate, the review may be scoped in two phases. In the first phase the project lead(s), the relevant management team, and any subject matter experts will conduct a thorough review of the best available scientific information on the EFH provisions contained in a particular FMP. Based on this review, the Council may embark on a second phase in which changes to EFH provisions, as well as commensurate minimization measures are considered for Council adoption. The Council should adopt a schedule and timeline for both the review phase, and if necessary, the second phase in which changes to EFH provisions are considered.