

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT ON DEEP-SET BUOY
GEAR (DSBG) AUTHORIZATION FINAL PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Preliminary Draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Analysis

NMFS has prepared a Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (PDEIS) analyzing the Council's range of alternatives (ROA) for authorizing DSBG under the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species. This document (attached to this report) includes background on the proposed action, a description of the ROA and the affected environment, and an analysis of projected biological and socioeconomic impacts under each of the Council's alternatives. This analysis is based on data collected from DSBG EFP trials and landings receipts.

The PDEIS is a working draft, intended to inform Council discussion on this agenda item. It is not a complete Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). NMFS expects to complete the DEIS and make it available for public comment in 2020. Sections on cumulative impacts and applicability to other laws and regulations that are not included in the PDEIS will be completed as part of the full DEIS. Other components which are not included in the PDEIS, but which will be added to the DEIS at a later date, include a glossary of terms, a list of acronyms, and a list of indexes. Additionally, NMFS plans to update the biological and socioeconomic impact analyses with data from 2019 DSBG trials, and may include supplemental analytical work pertinent to the Magnuson-Stevens Act (e.g., Section 303(b)(6)) and other applicable laws and executive orders (EO), such as the Regulatory Flexibility Act and EO 12866.

Looking ahead, NMFS will continue working to complete a DEIS and other necessary analyses to address federal review requirements for authorizing DSBG. Council selection of a Final Preferred Alternative under this agenda item will inform NMFS' consultation on a detailed proposed action under the Endangered Species Act. NMFS can report progress, as well as key findings, during future Council meetings.