



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232

September 9, 2019

Mr. Phil Anderson, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Mr. Anderson:

On behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, I am approving Amendment 28 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The purpose of Amendment 28 is to minimize the adverse effects of fishing on groundfish EFH, use fish resources within constraints of overfished species rebuilding requirements to maximize yield of the groundfish fishery, and protect deep water habitat, including deep sea corals. Overall, the Amendment 28 changes to the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP and associated regulations will adjust bottom trawl fishing closures to minimize adverse effects of fishing to groundfish Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), re-open portions of the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA), and close deep waters off California to protect deep water habitats, including deep sea corals.

The changes in Amendment 28 also adjust portions of the FMP that do not have corresponding regulation changes or on-the-water effects. These changes:

- 1) add a description of the purpose of the periodic EFH review;
- 2) update summaries for research and data needs; and
- 3) revise descriptions of:
 - a) groundfish life histories;
 - b) designated EFH and the effects of fishing and non-fishing activities on designated EFH; and
 - c) latitude and longitude coordinates and maps of EFH conservation areas.

Finally, the approved FMP changes archive portions of EFH-related appendices that no longer reflect the best scientific information available.

Although we have approved the Council's changes to the FMP, we are still working to finalize the regulatory changes that implement Amendment 28. On August 15, 2019, we published a proposed rule to implement Amendment 28 (84 FR 41818), and we expect to have the final rule effective on January 1, 2020. The final rule implements the on-the-water provisions in the Council's recommendations from its April 2018 meeting, including the EFH conservation area changes, trawl RCA changes, and the deep-water closure, as modified by Council recommendations from its September 2018 meeting.



The Council developed Amendment 28 over many Council meetings. Developing such a complex action required hard work and the focused attention of the Council, its advisory bodies, and its staff. I am grateful for the admirable efforts that the Council family has given to this important and collaborative management package that utilizes the best scientific information available to protect EFH, increase flexibility for bottom trawl fishermen by reopening the trawl RCA off Oregon and California, and protect sensitive deep-sea corals. We applaud the Council's effort to engage a wide range of stakeholders in developing this action. We also appreciate and acknowledge the work of stakeholders both at Council meetings and in their homeports to craft alternatives, submit public comments, and generate support for this action. Amendment 28 is the product of extensive Council and advisory body deliberations over the past few years, and demonstrates an impressive commitment to the principles of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Thank you for your time and care.

Sincerely,



Barry A. Thom
Regional Administrator

cc: Chuck Tracy, Executive Director, Pacific Fishery Management Council

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