

NON-TRAWL AREA MANAGEMENT

In [April](#) and [November 2021](#), the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) developed several management measure alternatives to revise certain closed areas that restrict groundfish fishing activity. During the November 2021 meeting, the Council adopted a revised purpose and need statement and a range of alternatives (ROA) to provide fishing access to the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (NT_RCA), modify allowed gear types and the existing boundaries of the NT_RCA, repeal the Cowcod Conservation Areas (CCAs), and potentially prohibit bottom contact gears inside certain exposed areas inside bottom trawl Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Areas (EFHCAs).

At its April 2022 meeting, Council staff provide a discussion and preliminary analysis of the current ROA to assist the Council in continued refinement of those alternatives or for further development of additional alternatives that would meet the purpose and need statement (Agenda Item F.6, Attachment 1). The Council [revised the ROA](#) to include additional habitat protection considerations and change the NT_RCA boundaries for the directed halibut fishery and directed staff to revise the purpose and need to encompass these changes. During the April meeting, Council staff noted that some bottom trawl EFHCAs would be exposed to non-trawl fishing if the NT_RCA was modified or the CCA was removed; therefore, the Council added options to protect habitat. Changing the designation or creating new EFH designations or adding habitat protections widened the scope of the purpose and need statement, expanded the range of alternatives, and added complexity to the analysis. Staff also noted in the April analyses that the next full groundfish EFH review process is slated to start in 2025 whereby impacts to habitat by fishery and gear is considered holistically, including tribal, state and federal fisheries.

During future workload discussions at the June 2022 meeting, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) noted they would not be prepared to move forward on the proposed NT_RCA changes off of Washington and directed staff to discontinue work on that alternative.

Attachment 1 provides a draft Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR) for the Council to consider in potentially revising the ROA and selecting a preliminary preferred alternative(s), as appropriate. Within the draft EA/RIR, staff provide a revised purpose and need statement and an impact assessment of each of the alternatives, excluding the Washington NT_RCA alternative. The analysis includes detailed maps of the current area management measures and available mitigation tools (e.g., YRCAs, EFHCAs) as well as the proposed areas that would be opened under the alternatives and new tools that could be developed by the Council (e.g., block area closures). The Council and its stakeholders should consider the additional complexity and resulting benefit that comes with adding habitat protections at this time given that a more holistic look at EFHCAs for bottom contact gears is a few years away.

In addition, a public mapping portal has been developed to help Council members, industry, managers, and other stakeholders understand the potential implications of the proposed area modifications. The portal can be found at <https://arcg.is/4GP19>.

Under this agenda item, the Council is scheduled to review the draft EA/RIR and potentially revise the current purpose and need and range of alternatives (ROAs) and select a preliminary preferred alternative(s). The Council is anticipated to select final preferred alternatives in March 2023.

Council Action:

1. **Review and potentially revise the purpose and need and range of alternatives, as appropriate.**
2. **Adopt Preliminary Preferred Alternatives, As Appropriate.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.6, Attachment 1 (***Electronic Only***): Proposed Amendment to the Pacific Groundfish Fishery Management Plan for Non-Trawl Sector Area Management Measures.
2. Agenda Item G.6.a, WDFW Report 1: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Report on Non-Trawl Area Management
3. If Received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- G.6 Non-Trawl Area Management Brett Wiedoff/Jessi Doerpinghaus
(Part 1 - *G.6.a and G.6.b on Sunday, then continue Monday with G.6.c*)
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Review and Potentially Revise the Purpose and Need and Range of Alternatives; Adopt Preliminary Preferred Alternatives, As Appropriate

PFMC
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