

1.0 INTRODUCTION

[Refer to Section 2.0, page 2-1 of FMP]

Amendment 4 updates and revises the original fishery management plan (FMP) for the Pacific coast groundfish fishery off the coast of Washington, Oregon, and California developed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), approved by the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), (Assistant Administrator) on January 4, 1982, and implemented on October 5, 1982. Amendment 4 is intended to replace the entire text of the original FMP, although the reader may wish to refer to the original FMP for additional background material relevant to the Pacific coast groundfish fishery. Except for those measures specifically revised, added or deleted by this amendment, all regulations and notices authorized by the original FMP and currently in effect at time Amendment 4 is implemented are intended to continue in effect concurrent with the implementation of this amendment.

In 1977, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) developed and the Secretary implemented the preliminary management plan (PMP) for the foreign trawl fishery of the California-Washington region. In 1982, the original FMP replaced the foreign trawl PMP and state management of domestic fishing in the 3 to 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Since 1982, the FMP has been amended three times.

The Pacific coast groundfish fishery is the largest, most important fishery managed by the Council in terms of landings and value. The fisheries for some of the most valuable stocks have become more competitive and management more controversial in recent years. Although the original FMP provided flexibility to modify management measures for biological reasons, it contained no provisions for making adjustments for social or economic reasons. Amendment 4, among other things, provides these provisions, incorporates the previous amendments into a single document, and reorganizes the FMP into a more readable and useful document.

The following summary describes the major elements of Amendment 4:

1. Optimum Yield - The original FMP defines optimum yield (OY) for the Pacific coast groundfish fishery as a combination of specific numerical OYs for six species of groundfish and a generic non-numerical OY for the remainder of approximately 80 species which make up the fishery management unit. Amendment 4 defines a single non-numerical OY for all groundfish species in the fishery management unit and provides for specifying quotas or harvest guidelines for species needing individual management or increased protection.
2. Goals and Objectives - Amendment 4 updates, revises, and consolidates the goals and objectives for the Pacific coast groundfish fishery.
3. Management Processes - Amendment 4 maintains the existing authority for recommending management measures for resource conservation reasons and provides new authority and criteria for recommending management measures, including direct allocation of the resource, in response to social and economic issues as identified by the Council. In addition, it establishes framework procedures for recommending the establishment and adjustment of annual specifications and management measures without

resorting to amending the FMP. It describes the Council process, public notice and analytical requirements, and implementation scenario for Council recommendations based on the amount of public notice and opportunity for comment and analysis of impacts provided by the Council prior to taking a final action.

4. Experimental Fishing Permits (EFP) - Amendment 4 streamlines the process for NMFS to receive, review, and issue EFPs by authorizing the NMFS Regional Director to review applications for EFPs and make a determination whether or not they warrant further review and consultation with the Council. Currently all applications, regardless of their merit, must be published in the Federal Register and considered by the Council.
5. Scientific Research - Amendment 4 establishes a definition for determining what kinds of activities can be considered scientific research and a process for the Secretary to acknowledge such research.
6. Review of State Regulations for Consistency with the FMP - Amendment 4 establishes a process by which the Council may review state regulations for conformity with the FMP and its implementing regulations and either recommend their adoption as federal regulations or certify their consistency to a state without a recommendation for federal regulations.
7. Removal of Outdated FMP Provisions and Regulations - Amendment 4 deletes or revises a number of FMP provisions and implementing regulations which are not consistent with the current condition of the fishery. These changes are referenced throughout the text.

Although the FMP and its implementing regulations are not intended to regulate fishing for groundfish in the territorial sea of Washington, Oregon, and California, it is anticipated that state regulations will not substantially and adversely affect the carrying out of the FMP. The scope of the FMP includes management of the groundfish stocks throughout their range. Groundfish taken in both the EEZ and territorial waters off the coast of Washington, Oregon, and California, unless otherwise stated, are included in the computation of maximum sustainable yield (MSY), acceptable biological catch (ABC), harvest guidelines or quotas, incidental catch limitations, trip limits, daily catch limits, and any other specified amounts of any species included in Table 3.1 pursuant to any management measure which is based on a particular amount of fish. It is expected that the states will implement consistent regulations in the territorial sea for these species. It is expected that the framework measures established by this FMP and its implementing regulations will provide the management flexibility to address most potential resource and fishery changes in the foreseeable future. However, it is expected that this FMP will be amended from time to time whenever necessary for effective management of the resource and fisheries.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared with the initial implementation of this FMP and an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for each of the first three amendments. A Supplemental EIS was prepared for Amendment 4 which, in conjunction with the original EIS, assesses the effect that implementation of this FMP is expected to have on the environment of the region.