

ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERIES

SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



Project Newsletter No. 3

November 2000

SEIS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE

On October 1, 1999, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced its intention to prepare a new Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). Official Scoping for the SEIS was held through December 15, 1999, and a Scoping Report was prepared and distributed for public comment on March 27, 2000. A 30-day public review period ended on April 30, 2000.

Since the March 2000 Newsletter, NMFS has continued preparing the draft programmatic SEIS for the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries FMPs. Comments received on the March 27, 2000 Scoping Report were used to finalize the alternative fisheries management policies (frameworks of specific policy objectives) and the model management regimes (suite of management actions) that are being used to illustrate the types of fisheries management actions that could be taken to implement a particular policy framework. These model regimes are then used to assess the potential environment consequences of each alternative fisheries management policy framework considered in the SEIS.

The programmatic SEIS is intended to be an overarching planning document that guides the development of future fisheries management actions. It will contain an analysis of the current management regime (the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP and the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP) and direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on the biological and socioeconomic environment. It will provide information that illustrates the potential environmental consequences associated with alternative fisheries management policy frameworks. In this way, the SEIS will be a reference document to allow NMFS, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, and the public to better evaluate the impacts of federal fishery management actions.

The release of the draft programmatic SEIS has been delayed to provide time to incorporate the findings of a NMFS Biological Opinion on the Alaska groundfish fisheries and the effects on the recovery of species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. This opinion is scheduled to be completed by November 30, 2000. Information contained in the opinion will be reviewed and, where necessary, incorporated into the draft programmatic SEIS. We therefore expect that **the draft SEIS will be ready for public review in early 2001.**

WOULD YOU LIKE A COPY OF THE SEIS?

Once it has been completed, copies of the draft SEIS will be available for public review and comment. Public hearings will be scheduled to receive testimony on the Draft SEIS, and a deadline for written comments will be established. Comments received from the public will be considered by NMFS when preparing the final programmatic SEIS.

Due to the scope of this programmatic SEIS, it will be a **very large document**, consisting of numerous volumes and **over 4,000 pages**. Because of its large size, NMFS intends to make the document available in several formats to make it easier for the public to review:

1) The complete SEIS will be available on the Internet through the NMFS-Alaska region webpage. Individuals will be able to access all chapters and appendices, conduct word searches, and utilize the modern web-tools available to scan the document to find information of interest.

**The SEIS will be available on-line at
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov>**

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2) Another recommended option is to request a copy of the SEIS on compact disc. If you have a personal computer with a CD drive, you can use software to scan, scroll, and review the SEIS. In some cases, illustrations contained in the SEIS will appear better on your screen than when printed on paper. A CD copy of the SEIS will save paper and desk space.

3) A final option is to request a copy of the SEIS in printed format.

We request that individuals interested in receiving the SEIS contact us by December 15, 2000 and tell us what format you prefer. Please mail requests to: Steven K. Davis, NMFS, 222 West 7th Ave., Room 517, Anchorage, AK 99513.

NOTIFICATION OF PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

Once the draft programmatic SEIS is completed and ready for public review, the Environmental Protection Agency will file a notice in the Federal Register, initiating the public comment period. As soon as we can determine when the review period will begin, NMFS will send out a newsletter, put a notice on its website, and publish a notice in major newspapers in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. The notice will define the formal review period and provide a schedule and locations for public hearings.

For more information about this project, contact Steve Davis, Regional NEPA Coordinator, 907-271-3523 or send e-mail to: steven.k.davis@noaa.gov.



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