

# ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERIES

## PROGRAMMATIC SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



*Project Newsletter No. 11*

*July 2003*

### ***PSEIS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE***

#### *Release of Revised Draft PSEIS*

At its June 2003 meeting in Kodiak, Alaska, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) reviewed the alternatives presented in the revised draft PSEIS and identified a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for purposes of soliciting public comment. The PPA for the most part takes the policy goals and objectives described under Alternative 3 and merges them with some of the policy elements of Alternatives 1 and 4. Several new policy objectives were also added. As a result, the PPA represents a mix and match of Alternatives 1-4 contained in the PSEIS. NOAA Fisheries has reviewed this recommendation and has also selected it as the agency's preliminary preferred alternative.

The management approach and the objectives in the PPA reflect a precautionary approach to fisheries management and communicate a policy direction for the future. The PPA addresses public comments that were provided to the agency on the 2001 draft PSEIS, as well as comments provided by the public during the development of the revised draft. The public comment was broad-based, capturing views from the full spectrum of stakeholders. The NPFMC and NOAA Fisheries take pride in their efforts to exceed NEPA requirements through the public process followed in restructuring the alternatives. The example FMP bookends (analyzed in Chapter 4) serve to illustrate management concepts and future actions that logically flow from the PPA and provide sufficient detail to allow for focused analysis of their environmental consequences. The NPFMC believes that this revised draft PSEIS provides the public and decision-makers with the information they need to understand:

- the challenges in managing a complex fishery,
- the uncertainties being faced and how managers are addressing those uncertainties, and
- the value of the Alaska groundfish fisheries to the residents of Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and the nation.

The range of alternatives contained in this 2003 revised draft PSEIS went through a number of iterations and include the perspective of just about all the constituent

groups that have been involved in this PSEIS process. The PSEIS is a very large document. It has to be because this process of environmental review and evaluation of fisheries management has not been done in a comprehensive manner in a long time. The NPFMC and NOAA Fisheries staff worked to ensure that the alternatives analyzed accommodate as many perspectives as possible. The intent of NEPA is to provide information on a proposed project in a usable format to the public and to decision-makers so that:

- the questions and the issues are well-defined
- the information is accessible
- the public can provide meaningful, thoughtful advice, and
- decision-makers can evaluate the options and easily interpret the advice and the analysis that lead to conclusions that have to be made.

The efforts made to craft the alternatives and define the bookends resulted in two things that the NPFMC and NOAA Fisheries see as quite important: (1) it has served to bring the perspectives of the various public and constituent groups together with the NPFMC in a way that managers can understand how to incorporate their views into alternatives and future policy decisions; and (2) the PSEIS process has required that the NPFMC and NOAA Fisheries to review its past performance, its successes and failures, and based on those lessons-learned, draft a programmatic policy for managing the Alaska groundfish fisheries in the future.

### **What is the schedule for public review?**

Due to the scope of this PSEIS, it is a very large document and it will consist of numerous volumes. Currently, we expect that the document will be over 7,000 pages long. Because of its large size, NOAA Fisheries intends to make the document available in several formats to make it easier for review. **We request that if you are interested in reviewing the PSEIS, that you contact us by August 15, 2003 and tell us what format you prefer.** Please fill out the enclosed form in this newsletter and mail it to: Steven K. Davis, NOAA

Fisheries, 222 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Room 517, Anchorage, AK 99513.

The complete PSEIS will be made available on the NOAA Fisheries-Alaska region webpage on the Internet. Individuals will be able to access all chapters and appendices, conduct word searches, and utilize the modern web-tools available to scan the document and find information of interest. **The webpage address is <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov>.** A new feature beginning with this document, is NOAA's E-Comment system that allows the public to access any or all sections of the PSEIS and **submit comments electronically**. This is a more modern and efficient method for reviewing and commenting on the document and the PPA.

A good choice is to request a copy of the PSEIS on Compact Disc. If you have a personal computer with a CD drive, you can drop the disc into your drive and use the available software to scan, scroll, and review the PSEIS. In some cases, illustrations contained in the PSEIS will appear better on your screen than when printed on paper. A CD copy of the PSEIS will save paper and desk space.

Another option is to request a copy of the PSEIS in printed format. Printed copies will be distributed to public libraries and agency offices and to any organization where they can be shared with numerous individuals. Only a limited number of the 2003 draft PSEIS will be printed due to its size, weight and shipping cost.

### **Notification of the Beginning of the Public Review Period**

Once the revised draft PSEIS is completed and ready for public review, the Environmental Protection Agency will file a notice in the Federal Register, initiating the public comment period. The public review period will begin on August 29, 2003. A notice alerting the public of the beginning of the public review period will be published on our website.

### **Submitting Public Comments**

Public comments on the revised draft PSEIS and the PPA will be accepted until 4pm on October 15, 2003. **Public comments will only be accepted in one of the following ways: (1) in writing, submitted by mail and delivered by the comment deadline; (2) in writing by**

**using the E-Comments form on the web; and (3) orally, at a public hearing. Comments submitted by fax will not be accepted.** Public hearings and information meetings will be scheduled in Anchorage, Kodiak, and Juneau, Alaska, and in Seattle, Washington. Other hearing locations may be added. Public hearings will be scheduled starting in mid-September and early-October. Dates, times, and location information will be provided on the NOAA Fisheries-Alaska region website. Following the close of the public comment period, the agency will review the comments and prepare a Comment Analysis Report. This report will be presented to the NPFMC at its February 2004 meeting. Following a review of the comments, the NPFMC will review its PPA and finalize its preferred alternative recommendation to NOAA Fisheries. A Final PSEIS document will be published next summer and the agency will issue its Record of Decision on or before September 1, 2004.

### **For More Information**

To view the revised draft PSEIS, or for information on the schedule of public hearings, consult the NOAA Fisheries webpage at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov> , or contact Steve Davis at (907) 271-3523.