

ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERIES SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



Project Newsletter No.2

March 2000

SUMMARY OF SCOPING

On October 1, 1999, NMFS announced its intention to prepare a new Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). With this announcement, official scoping for the SEIS began. Public comments were initially due to NMFS by November 15, 1999; however, NMFS extended the scoping period until December 15, 1999 to provide the public with more time to develop comments. NMFS solicited input from the public on which issues should be addressed in the analysis and what alternatives to status quo management should be considered.

Public notices were prepared announcing NMFS's intention to prepare the SEIS and the dates for the public scoping meetings. The notices were published in the Anchorage Daily News on November 7, 1999; the Kodiak Daily Mirror on November 5, 1999; the Juneau Empire on November 7, 1999; and the Seattle Times/Post Intelligencer on November 8, 1999.

The first project newsletter was prepared and mailed to a list of interested individuals, agency representatives, and organizations that had been developed by NMFS. The newsletter provided background information about the project, an overview of the NEPA process and scoping, instructions on how to submit comments on the project, information on the public scoping meetings, and contact information. Also included in the newsletter was a comment card that could be filled out and returned to NMFS. The newsletter was mailed on October 28, 1999 to approximately 260 addresses.

Cooperating Agencies

Both the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service, have agreed to participate in the preparation of the SEIS as cooperating agencies. Neither agency submitted oral or written comments during the scoping period.

Other Governmental Involvement

On December 9, 1999, NMFS held a teleconference with representatives of EPA Region 10 (Seattle) to receive scoping comments on the SEIS. The EPA had previously provided written comments to NMFS during preparation of the 1999 Groundfish SEIS and is resubmitting that letter. In addition, the EPA provided a cover letter dated December 22, 1999 from the EPA to NMFS, summarizing the concerns to be considered during the development of the SEIS.

Public Scoping Meetings

Four public scoping meetings were held during November 1999 to solicit comments from the public. The public scoping meetings were held at the following locations:

- Juneau, Alaska, November 8, 1999
- Anchorage, Alaska, November 9, 1999
- Kodiak, Alaska, November 10, 1999
- Seattle, Washington, November 12, 1999

Testimony was received and evaluated as part of the scoping process. Verbal testimony is summarized in the Scoping Report.

Tribal Government Coordination

On December 15, 1999, NMFS prepared and mailed a letter to 113 Alaska tribal governments, providing information about the SEIS and soliciting input from interested parties. Tribal entities situated anywhere from the coast to 60 miles inland were identified from the Bering Strait southward to Dixon Entrance and included on the mailing list.

Written Correspondence Received During Scoping

Written comments received on the project have consisted of letters and postage-paid comment cards that were sent out with the Scoping Newsletter. As of the date of this newsletter, 420 written responses have been received. The issues identified in this correspondence are summarized in the Scoping Report.

SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SEIS

A Scoping Report for the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic SEIS has been prepared which presents a summary of scoping efforts and comments received during scoping. In addition, the Scoping Report reviews the structure and content of the draft programmatic SEIS, including 6 programmatic alternatives proposed for analysis. These alternatives are designed to sharply define the issues and provide a clear basis for choice. In brief, the alternatives are defined as follows:

- Alternative 1 (no action): continue with existing management policy;
- Alternative 2: adopt a new management policy framework that emphasizes increased protection for marine mammals and seabirds;

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- Alternative 3: adopt a new management policy framework that emphasizes increased protection for target groundfish species;
- Alternative 4: adopt a new management policy framework that emphasizes increased protection for non-target and forage fish species;
- Alternative 5: adopt a new management policy framework that emphasizes increased protection for fish habitat;
- Alternative 6: adopt a new management policy framework that emphasizes an increase in long-term socioeconomic benefits.

Public Review Period

The Scoping Report is available to for public review as an informational item. However, NMFS would like to receive any comments on the proposed programmatic alternatives. A 30-day review period beginning April 1, 2000 and ending April 30, 2000 has been established. Any comments received on the Scoping Report will be considered in the development of the SEIS.

Copies of the Scoping Report may be obtained by contacting:

In Juneau

Carol Tocco
 Phone: 907-586-7032
 E-mail: carol.tocco@noaa.gov

In Anchorage

Steven K. Davis
 Phone: 907-271-3523
 E-mail: steven.k.davis@noaa.gov

The Scoping Report also is available on the NMFS, Alaska Region's World Wide Web site at www.fakr.noaa.gov.

To request a copy by mail, write to:

In Juneau

NMFS, Alaska Region
 709 W. 9th Street
 P.O. Box 21668
 Juneau, AK 99802

In Anchorage

NMFS
 222 W. 7th Avenue, Room 517
 Anchorage, AK 99508

Written comments on the scoping summary report should be submitted to:

Mail or Fax

Lori Gravel
 NMFS, Alaska Region
 P.O. Box 21668
 Juneau, AK 99802
 Fax: 907-586-7255

Hand Delivered

Lori Gravel
 NMFS, Alaska Region
 Room 443-5, Federal Building
 907 West 9th Street
 Juneau, AK

Comments will not be accepted via e-mail or Internet.

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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