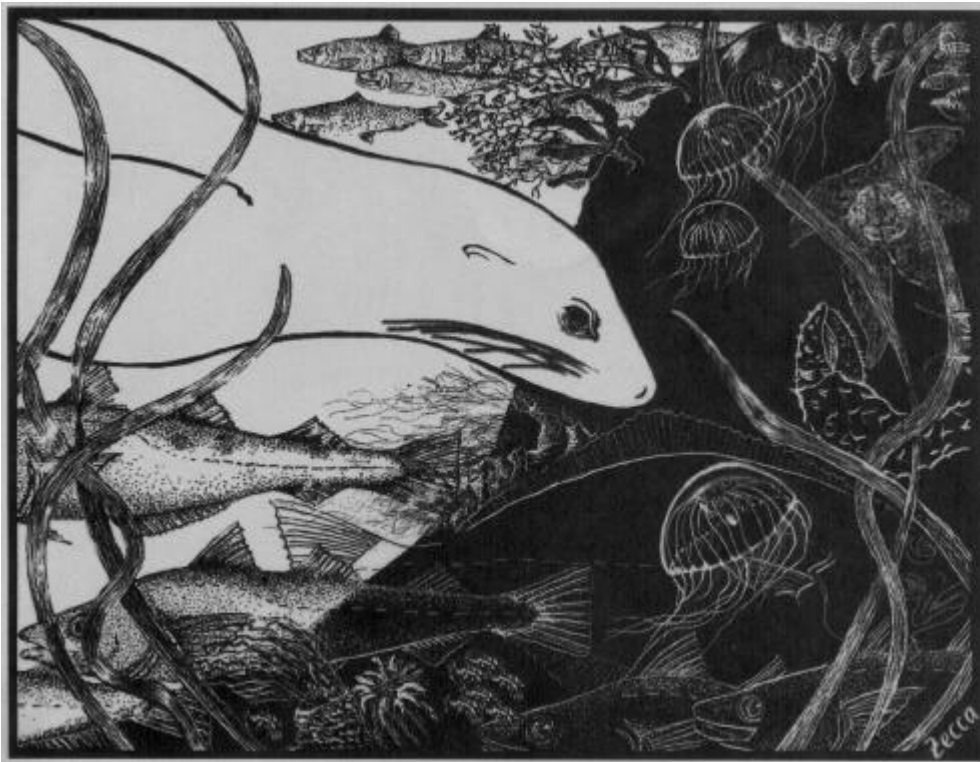


**SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERIES  
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**



**MARCH 27, 2000**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to summarize the comments received during the scoping period for the programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) being prepared by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on Federal Groundfish Fishery Management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters off Alaska, and to describe how the scoping process has influenced the development of the SEIS. This report identifies the significant environmental issues for analysis in the SEIS and describes revised project alternatives as a result of scoping.

This report also serves as the means of presenting NMFS's SEIS document outline and work plan. The report presents an overview of the intended analysis and work schedule. While these topics are not typically included in agency scoping reports, NMFS has chosen to expand this report due to the complexity in designing a meaningful analysis that fully satisfies the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), while at the same time meeting the needs of NMFS and the public.

It is intended that this programmatic SEIS serve as the central environmental document for both the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish FMP. This goal will be achieved by: (1) updating the original Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) by providing a historical review of how the groundfish fisheries and the environment have changed since publication of the original EISs; (2) describing how new scientific and fishery information is being utilized; (3) building upon the work conducted in preparing the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Alaska Groundfish Fisheries—December 1998 (1998 SEIS); (4) describing the cumulative effects of past and present groundfish fisheries management regimes upon the marine ecosystem and the environment; and (5) reviewing current and alternative management regimes to determine their potential impacts on the human environment.

### **1.1 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose of the programmatic SEIS is twofold. First, there is a need to prepare a reference document that accurately describes the current management regime in Alaska and our current knowledge about the physical, biological, and human environment in order to assess impacts to the environment caused by past and current fishery activities. Since the original EISs were published approximately twenty years ago, significant changes have occurred in the environment. NEPA requires preparation of an EIS when such changes have occurred and this document is intended to bring both the decision-maker and the public up-to-date on the current state of the environment and to assess the degree that the groundfish fisheries have contributed to these changes. The second purpose of this SEIS is to provide decisions-makers and the public with an evaluation of the effects of the current management regime, as well as different management regimes, on the human environment that facilitates an assessment of whether a different management regime should be implemented. Future, proposal-specific NEPA documents will incorporate by reference, or tier off, the SEIS, thereby concentrating the public's attention on the issues specific to the action being evaluated at that time. It is reasonable to expect that the programmatic SEIS will require periodic updates as new information and/or significant changes occur to the environment.

## **1.2 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION**

### **1.2.1 Project Background**

In 1976, Congress passed into law what is currently known as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA). This law authorized the United States to manage its fishery resources from 3 to 200 nautical miles off its coast (the EEZ). Regional Councils were established and they were charged to prepare FMPs for every fishery that required management. Two of the earliest FMPs in the country were the GOA Groundfish FMP in 1978, and the BSAI Groundfish FMP in 1981 (Figure 1). These FMPs were prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and approved by NMFS and the Secretary of Commerce. Both plans had to satisfy MSFCMA and other applicable federal laws, including NEPA.

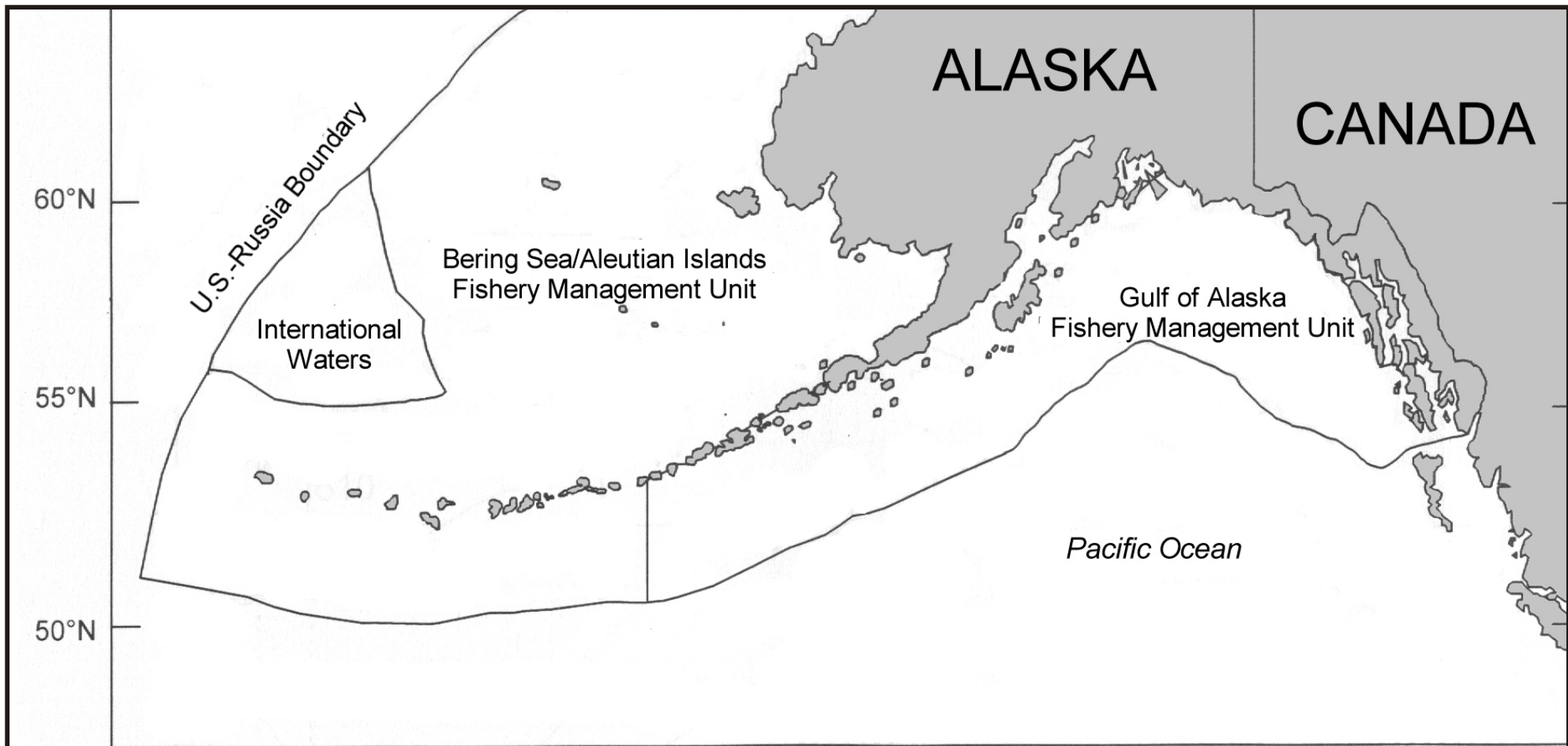
In 1978 and 1981, EISs were prepared and approved for the GOA and BSAI Groundfish FMPs, respectively. Since then, these FMPs have been amended more than 50 times. For each amendment, either an Environmental Assessment (EA), or a more in-depth EIS was prepared, and approved.


In the early 1990s, NMFS began to recognize that the original GOA and BSAI EISs would benefit from being updated. Scientists have documented changes to the physical and biological environments since the EISs were prepared. The cause for these ecosystem changes is not presently known and is the subject of considerable research at the local, national, and international levels. What is known is that in the late-1970s, species such as king crab, herring, and Steller sea lions were abundant, but are less so today. Conversely, other species that were not very abundant then, such as pollock, cod, and flatfish, are more abundant today.

Changes have also occurred in the groundfish fisheries. The Alaska groundfish fishery, once dominated by foreign fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, is now comprised of U.S. fishermen. Changes have occurred in how fish are caught, where the harvest takes place, who takes the harvest, and where the harvest is processed. Today, both the GOA and BSAI FMPs reflect an evolution of the American fishery in Alaska. As more is learned about the fishery, scientists, managers, and the public work together to design new management programs through the Council process aimed at addressing a broad range of issues concerning the health of the marine ecosystem and the fisheries dependent on it.

In 1997, NMFS started preparing the 1998 SEIS to reflect changes that had occurred since the original EISs were prepared for the GOA and BSAI FMPs. The 1998 SEIS was completed in December 1998. In early 1999, the 1998 SEIS was challenged in the U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington (Court). The Court found that the 1998 SEIS was too narrow in scope and that a more programmatic, (i.e., “big picture”) analysis should have been done. The court returned the 1998 SEIS to NMFS with the following instructions on what it expected the next SEIS to contain:

1. NMFS shall prepare a comprehensive programmatic SEIS that defines the federal action under review as, among other things, all activities authorized and managed under the FMPs and all amendments thereto, and that addresses the conduct of the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries and the FMPs as a whole.



<p>NATIONAL OCEANIC &amp; ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION          ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERIES SUPPLEMENTAL          ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT</p>			
<p><b>GULF OF ALASKA AND BERING          SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS          FISHERY MANAGEMENT UNITS</b></p>			
JOB NO:	32525-005-220	DRAWN:	LAY
DATE:	15 DECEMBER 1999	FILE:	FIG01.CDR

**FIGURE 1**

2. The SEIS will evaluate the significant changes that have occurred in the GOA and the BSAI groundfish fisheries, including the significant cumulative effects of environmental and management changes in the groundfish fisheries since the issuance of the 1978 and 1981 EISs.
3. The SEIS will present a “general picture of the environmental effects of the [FMPs], rather than focusing narrowly on one aspect of them.” The SEIS does not have to consider detailed alternatives regarding each and every aspect of the FMPs.
4. The SEIS will provide reasonable management alternatives, as well as an analysis of their impacts, so as to “sharply define the issues and provide a clear basis for choice among options by the decision-maker and the public.”
5. In preparing the programmatic SEIS, NMFS will comply with the public participation requirements of NEPA, and its implementing regulations.
6. NMFS will publish a Notice of Intent to prepare the programmatic SEIS in the Federal Register by October 1, 1999. The public scoping period will run, at a minimum, from October 1 to November 15, 1999. NMFS may extend the public scoping period beyond November 15, 1999 if it deems such an extension to be appropriate. The Court will, at a later time, issue an order scheduling a deadline for issuance of the final programmatic SEIS.
7. NMFS will file written reports regarding the progress of its NEPA process every 60 days, starting from the date of this Order.

On October 1, 1999, NMFS announced its intention to prepare a new programmatic SEIS for the GOA and BSAI Groundfish FMPs. With that announcement, the official NEPA process for the SEIS was begun. The Notice of Intent, published in the Federal Register, is included in Appendix A.

### **1.2.2 Proposed Action**

For this SEIS, NMFS defines the federal action as the management of groundfish fisheries off Alaska and the authorization of groundfish fishing activities off Alaska pursuant to approved FMPs. NMFS concluded that defining the federal action in this way would ensure that a programmatic evaluation of the groundfish fisheries would occur in the SEIS and that the intent of NEPA with respect to the requirement for such evaluations would be met. NMFS also determined that defining the federal action in this way would satisfy the directions of the court concerning the scope of the proposed federal action under review as, “among other things, all activities authorized and managed under the FMPs and all amendments thereto, and that addresses the conduct of the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries as a whole.” Therefore, this SEIS will not examine in detail nor develop an alternative to the MSFCMA, the authorities and mission of NMFS, or the regional council system. Rather, its scope will focus on the FMPs themselves including the stated policies, goals and objectives, and categorical management measures (e.g. tools) contained within the plans.

### **1.2.3 Alternatives Presented During Scoping**

The focus of this SEIS is the activities authorized pursuant to the existing GOA and BSAI Groundfish FMPs, as amended. This SEIS will focus on management policies and principles defined by the MSFCMA, the two FMPs, and all of the categorical management measures available for purposes of managing the harvest of groundfish fishery resources in the EEZ off Alaska. The term “categorical” is defined in this report to mean the broad management measures described in the FMPs. These broad measures, or tools, serve as the basis for implementing more detailed measures in fishery regulations. For example, the process described for setting the annual harvest level is a categorical management measure, or tool, that is used as a method of achieving a particular set of policy objectives. The actual harvest level, or total allowable catch (TAC) is defined in the implementing regulations that control the harvest of the groundfish fisheries. This SEIS will build on the 1998 SEIS by broadening its scope to include analyses of the effects of changing other categorical management measures in addition to the setting of harvest levels. It will address environmental issues, including fishery impacts to: target species, ecologically related groundfish species, bycatch, benthic habitats, marine mammals, seabirds, and people and fishing communities.

During the scoping period, NMFS proposed a number of broad thematic alternatives in the SEIS that could provide, in a programmatic sense, a conceptual framework for how alternative management regimes can be adopted to meet the goals and objectives of the FMPs. A notice was published in the Federal Register on November 3, 1999 that provided draft alternatives for the purposes of stimulating public comment (Appendix A). NMFS suggested the SEIS look at the following themes: 1) who harvests groundfish; 2) what groundfish is harvested; 3) when and where is groundfish harvested; and, 4) how groundfish is harvested. Draft sub-alternatives were developed for each theme.

## **2.0 THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS**

### **2.1 WHAT IS NEPA?**

NEPA is legislation signed into law in 1970 in response to an overwhelming national sentiment that federal agencies should take the lead in providing greater protection for the environment. It established environmental policy for the nation, provided an interdisciplinary framework for federal agencies, and established procedures and a public process to ensure that federal agency decision-makers take environmental factors into account. The analysis prepared for the federal decision-maker is typically an EA or an EIS.

NEPA requires preparation of EISs for major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. As stated in 40 CFR 1502.9(c): “Agencies shall prepare supplements to either draft or final environmental impact statements if: (i) The agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or (ii) There are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts.”

As stated previously in Section 1.2.2, NMFS defines the federal action as the management of groundfish fisheries off Alaska and the authorization of groundfish fishing activities off Alaska pursuant to approved



FMPs. NMFS concluded that defining the federal action in this way would ensure that a programmatic evaluation of the groundfish fisheries would occur in the SEIS and that the intent of NEPA with respect to the requirement for such evaluations would be met. NMFS also determined that defining the federal action in this way would satisfy the directions of the court concerning the scope of the proposed federal action under review as, “among other things, all activities authorized and managed under the FMPs and all amendments thereto, and that addresses the conduct of the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries as a whole.”

## **2.2 WHAT IS A PROGRAMMATIC EIS?**

A programmatic EIS is typically a broad, big picture environmental evaluation that examines a program on a large scale. Federal agencies have been encouraged to develop “multi-tiered” EISs as an attempt to streamline the NEPA process and avoid repetition by allowing the incorporation, by reference, of broad, program-oriented issues analyses when preparing EAs or EISs that focus on specific proposed federal actions. A programmatic EIS is usually prepared at the onset of a new federal program. In this case, the GOA and BSAI FMPs have been in place for approximately 20 years.

NMFS has determined that a programmatic SEIS for the Alaska groundfish fisheries should essentially be a broad environmental review of the GOA and BSAI Groundfish FMPs. The SEIS will include a cumulative impact analysis of actions that have occurred as a whole, and examine policies and potential future actions from a variety of environmental perspectives. The programmatic SEIS will therefore provide a broad look at the alternatives and the issues and be somewhat qualitative in nature. More case-specific, detailed analyses can be expected in the future when specific proposed management actions are evaluated in subsequent second-level tiered EAs or EISs. This programmatic SEIS will provide the agency and the public with insight as to what environmental effects would result from other management regimes within an analytical framework. Findings of this analysis could result in FMP amendments that could lead to formal rule-making and implementation of changes to the current management regime governing the groundfish fisheries off Alaska.

## **2.3 STEPS IN THE NEPA PROCESS**

### Scoping

The first step in the NEPA process is scoping (Figure 2). Scoping is designed to provide an opportunity for the public, agencies, and other interest groups to provide input on potential issues associated with the proposed project. Scoping is used to identify the scope of environmental issues related to the proposed project and can also identify new alternatives to be considered in the SEIS. Scoping is generally accomplished through written communications, statements at public meetings, or formal and informal consultation with agency officials, interested individuals, organizations, and groups.

### Draft SEIS

After scoping is completed, a Draft SEIS (DSEIS) is prepared (Figure 2). The DSEIS evaluates the important social, economic, and environmental impacts that may result from the proposed action. It focuses on cause

# STEPS IN THE NEPA-EIS PROCESS

**YOU ARE HERE**



**Federal Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare Programmatic SEIS**  
October 1, 1999

**Scoping**  
Scoping Period Officially Set October 1 - November 15, 1999  
NMFS Extends Scoping Period to December 15, 1999  
Public Scoping Meetings Held Week of November 8, 1999  
Written comments requested by December 15, 1999

**Scoping Report Prepared**  
Report provides a summary of scoping comments, analysis and decisions leading to a work plan for the SEIS

**Issuance of Draft SEIS**  
Draft EIS is published and made available for a 45-day public review

**Comment Period on Draft SEIS**  
This is your opportunity to review the Draft SEIS and to provide comments to NOAA/NMFS

**Public Hearings on Draft SEIS**  
An opportunity to meet the SEIS Team, ask questions, and provide comments on the Draft SEIS

**Issuance of Final SEIS**  
Final SEIS has been completed and is available for 30-day public review

**Comment Period on Final SEIS**  
This is the final opportunity to provide comments on the SEIS

**Record of Decision**  
Public statements of agency decisions

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERIES SUPPLEMENTAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## STEPS IN THE NEPA-EIS PROCESS



JOB NO: 32525-005-220 DRAWN: LAY  
DATE: 15 DECEMBER 1999 FILE: FIG02.CDR

**FIGURE 2**

and effect relationships, providing sufficient evidence and analysis for determining the magnitude of impacts and ways to minimize harm to the environment. The DSEIS should include a full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts and inform decision-makers and the public of the reasonable alternatives which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts, or which would enhance the quality of the human environment.

### Public Comment and Final SEIS

Following publication of the DSEIS, a minimum 45-day public comment period ensues, and a public hearing is conducted to provide an opportunity for interested parties to provide oral comments on the DSEIS (Figure 2). Verbal and written comments received are considered and the DSEIS revised as appropriate. NMFS is required to specifically address each substantive comment received and include copies of the comments in the Final SEIS (FSEIS). Once the FSEIS is completed, it is published and available for a minimum 30-day public comment period. Public comments received on the FSEIS are collected and considered by the lead agency prior to making a final decision.

### Record of Decision

Following the completion and submittal of the FSEIS and the public comment period, a Record of Decision (ROD) is prepared by the lead agency (Figure 2). The ROD includes: (1) a statement regarding what the decision is regarding the federal action; (2) an identification of alternatives considered in reaching the decision; and (3) a statement regarding the means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected.

## **3.0 SUMMARY OF SCOPING PROCESS**

### **3.1 PUBLIC NOTICE OF SEIS SCOPING**

Scoping for the programmatic SEIS began with publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on October 1, 1999. [64 FR 53305] (Appendix A). 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. A Supplemental Notice in the Federal Register was published on November 3, 1999 (see Appendix A) to provide additional information on project alternatives and announce the extension of the scoping period to December 15, 1999. [64 FR 59730] (Appendix A).

During the Council meeting held between October 11 and October 18, 1999, NMFS staff presented a status report on the SEIS to the Council and its associated committees. Copies of the Notice of Intent and a summary of the Court Order were also made available to the Council and the public. NMFS staff prepared two articles on the programmatic SEIS for use by the Council in its newsletters dated October 1999 and December 1999 (Appendix B). The first article alerted the public that NMFS was embarking on a new SEIS

project and described the process and schedule for scoping. The second article also described the SEIS process and summarized NMFS's scoping activities and the scoping meetings that were held in November 1999. The Council mailing list contains more than 1,000 addresses. The Council's newsletters are also on its web site.

On October 27, 1999, Mr. Steve Davis, NMFS Alaska Regional NEPA Coordinator, was interviewed by National Public Radio on the SEIS project and the objectives of scoping. This interview was broadcast on statewide radio on November 5, 1999, and contained information on the scoping meetings and how to provide written comments to NMFS.

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. Copies of the advertisements are provided in Appendix C.

A scoping 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. A copy of the newsletter and the mailing list is provided in Appendix D.

During December 6-13, 1999, NMFS staff again presented an SEIS project status report to the Council and its Advisory Panel. Copies of the two Federal Register notices, proposed schedule, and the project newsletter were available as handouts.

### **3.2 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 outside the Council process during the scoping period.

### **3.3 OTHER GOVERNMENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

#### *The North Pacific Fishery Management Council*

During meetings held on October 18, 1999, December 13, 1999, and February 13, 2000, the Council received status reports on the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic SEIS Project. There were a number of comments made by Council members which are included in Section 4 of this report.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

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 1998 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 this SEIS. These concerns are discussed in Section 4 of this report.

### **3.4 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS**

Four public scoping meetings were held during November 1999 to solicit comments from the public. Copies of sign-in sheets from each meeting are included in Appendix E. The public scoping meetings were held at the following locations:

- Juneau, Alaska, November 8, 1999, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Juneau Federal Building, Room 445, 709 West 9th Street, Juneau, Alaska.
- Anchorage, Alaska, November 9, 1999, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Anchorage Federal Building, Room 135, 222 West Seventh Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska.
- Kodiak, Alaska, November 10, 1999, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Kodiak Inn, 236 West Rezanof Drive, Kodiak, Alaska.
- Seattle, Washington, November 12, 1999, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Alaska Fisheries Science Center, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Building 4, Room 2039, Seattle, Washington.

### **3.5 TRIBAL GOVERNMENT MEETINGS**

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. A sample of the letter and the mailing list is included in Appendix F. The mailing list was developed by obtaining a list of all federally-recognized tribal entities in Alaska from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. From the initial list, 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. As of the date of this report, no meetings have been scheduled and no correspondence has been received by any of the tribal governments.

### **3.6 OTHER SCOPING EFFORTS**

NMFS attended a meeting with Earthjustice held on January 7, 2000, at the Federal Building in Juneau, Alaska. The purpose of the meeting was to allow Earthjustice representatives to provide further scoping comments on the SEIS and to learn more about NMFS's intentions in developing the SEIS. A memorandum summarizing the meeting is provided in Appendix G. A summary of the issues discussed during this meeting is provided in Section 4 of this report.

### 3.7 WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED DURING SCOPING

Written comments received on the project have consisted of postage-paid comment cards that were sent out with the Scoping Newsletter and personal and form letters including e-mail. As of the date of this report, 420 written responses have been received. The issues identified in this correspondence are summarized in Section 4 of this report.

## 4.0 ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING SCOPING

### 4.1 SUMMARY OF ISSUES IDENTIFIED AT GOVERNMENTAL SCOPING MEETINGS

#### North Pacific Fishery Management Council

On December 13, 1999, the Council received a status report on the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic SEIS during its Anchorage meeting. Comments made by Council members are summarized in Table 1.

#### EPA Teleconference and Letters

On December 9, 1999, NMFS held a teleconference with representatives of EPA Region 10 (Seattle) to receive scoping comments on the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic SEIS Project. The issues discussed during this teleconference are summarized in Table 1.

### 4.2 SUMMARY OF ISSUES IDENTIFIED AT THE PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

Four public scoping meetings were held in November 1999 to solicit comments from interested individuals, agency representatives, or organizations. The scoping meetings were run informally as “brainstorming sessions.” This approach was favored by the participants and resulted in considerable dialogue between NMFS and the participants, and among the participants themselves. The comments received during the meetings have been grouped into twenty-three issue categories, as presented in Table 1. Individual scoping comments, organized by meeting, are summarized in Appendix H. General information about each of the scoping meetings are provided below:

**Juneau Meeting:** The first public scoping meeting was held on November 8, 1999 in Juneau, Alaska. Approximately 14 people were in attendance, including members of the project team and representatives from NMFS. Copies of the sign-in sheets from the meeting are included in Appendix E.

**Anchorage Meeting:** The second public scoping meeting was held on November 9, 1999 in Anchorage, Alaska. Approximately 18 people were in attendance, including members of the project team and representatives from NMFS. Copies of the sign-in sheets from the meeting are included in Appendix E.

**TABLE 1**  
**ISSUES FROM SCOPING MEETINGS AND WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE**

Categorical Issues		Comment Reference Numbers
<b>NEPA PROCESS</b>		
1	Comments on the proposed NEPA schedule; it needs to provide sufficient time for analyses, consultation and coordination, and public review.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# N1, N2, N7, E3, E4, J1, A4, A6, A7, S8, S10  Letter ID# 378, 382
2	Comments on the purpose and use of the SEIS.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# K1, K2, S1, S2, S3, S5, S8, S9, S50, S51
3	Proposed scope of alternatives is too narrow, predetermined, or biased toward maintaining status quo. Subalternatives proposed during scoping range from status quo to more restrictive management.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# A1, A2, A3  Letter ID# 371, 379, 381, 382, 384, 417
4	The organization of alternative management measures by themes during scoping was confusing. Comments on objectives of scoping process.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# S6, S35  Letter ID# 371, 379, 381, 382, 384, 417
5	How will the scoping report and SEIS be structured?	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# N1, A18, K9, S16  Letter ID# 371, 381-384
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF SEIS ALTERNATIVES</b>		
6	Develop alternatives that further reduce groundfish bycatch (including prohibited species catch [PSC]), waste of resources, and the race for fish.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# A27, K16, S41, S42, O6  Letter ID# 102, 194, 198, 200, 204208, 225, 227, 232, 234, 237, 239, 240, 242, 245-247, 249, 251, 253, 254, 256, 258, 260, 263, 264, 267, 270, 272-275, 278, 281, 284, 286, 333-337, 341, 342, 344, 346, 348, 349, 358-360, 365, 366, 368, 374, 378, 380, 381, 383, 384, 386, 388, 390, 391, 393, 394, 396, 398-402, 407-410, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418
7	Further reduce fishing capacity.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# K16, K23, 07  Letter ID# 102, 104, 199 200, 204-209, 225, 227, 232, 234, 237, 239, 240, 242, 245-247, 249, 254, 256, 258, 260, 263, 264, 267, 270, 272-275, 278, 284, 286, 336, 339, 341,342, 344-346, 348, 349, 355, 356, 358-360, 365, 366, 368, 380, 381, 386, 390, 391, 393, 394, 396, 399-402, 407, 408, 409, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418

**TABLE 1 (Cont.)  
ISSUES FROM SCOPING MEETINGS AND WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE**

Categorical Issues		Comment Reference Numbers
DEVELOPMENT OF SEIS ALTERNATIVES (Cont.)		
8	Biological uncertainty should factor into management, consider precautionary and the effectiveness of adaptive management.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# A17, A27, K20, S17, S21, S22, S24, S25, S28, S29, S36, S37, S55, S56, S57, O3, O7  Letter ID# 338, 368, 380, 381-384, 405, 406, 410
9	Protect vulnerable species (those protected under Endangered Species Act, Steller sea lions, etc.)	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# S17, O5  Letter ID# 368, 380, 381, 384, 413, 414
10	Examine effectiveness of spatial, time, area, and gear management.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# A13, A14, A15, A26, K25, S17, S53, O2  Letter ID# 368, 379, 380, 382, 384
11	Comments that the subalternatives are inadequate. Suggestions for methodology for developing alternatives. Recommendation that only reasonable alternatives should be considered.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# N3, A19, A20, S6, S14, S27, S35, S39, S43, S44, S45, S46, S47, S49, S57, S60, O4  Letter ID# 371
12	Under allocation alternatives, consider TAC allocations to small boat/coastal communities.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# A25  Letter ID# 379
13	Considering restricting large vessels in nearshore areas to benefit coastal communities.	Letter ID# 379
14	Time/area closures – modify seasonal/area restrictions to accommodate needs of small boat and coastal communities.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# A26  Letter ID# 379
15	Consider bottom trawl and gear-limitations as a strategy to further protect benthic habitat EFH/HAPC).	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# A12, S17  Letter ID# 285, 331, 332, 334, 335, 343, 368, 369, 372, 374, 375, 376, 380-382, 384, 405, 406, 409
16	Range of suggested definitions for proposed action and the no action alternative.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# N4, S1  Letter ID# 381



**TABLE 1 (Cont.)**  
**ISSUES FROM SCOPING MEETINGS AND WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE**

Categorical Issues		Comment Reference Numbers
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF SEIS ALTERNATIVES (Cont.)</b>		
17	Examine ecosystem based management as an alternative.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# K3, K4, K13, K24, S17, S52, S53, S58, S59, O1, O2
18	Consider fish size limits for permissible catch as a possible management measure.	Letter ID# 368
<b>DISCUSSION OF AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/BACKGROUND</b>		
19	How has the <i>Exxon Valdez</i> oil spill affected groundfish fisheries?	Letter ID# 226
20	Include observer program in analysis.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# S29, S30  Letter ID# 369, 380, 382, 384, 404
21	Examine fishery wastes/offal.	Letter ID# 404
22	Examine the sustainability of fisheries.	Letter ID# 368, 380, 381
23	Examine how TAC is established, including accounting systems and methods and the basis for setting quotas. Include a comparison with management programs elsewhere.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# N5, A16, A28, A29, K5, K6, S59  Letter ID# 368, 380, 382, 383, 384
24	Provide a historical review of fisheries management changes and correlation with weather patterns, species distribution, technological advances, etc.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# A8, A9, A10, A18, K7, K8, K10, K11, K12, K14, K15, K17, K19, K22, S2, S13, S17, S19, S30, S34, S38, S55, S61, S62
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT</b>		
25	Scope must include not only additive effects of piecemeal management actions over time, but also the cumulative effects of the management regime as a whole.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# N5, N6, J2, A11, A18, K18, S11, S12, S15, S18, S20, S23, S42, S57, S59  Letter ID# 338, 368, 371, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 387, 406, 410
26	Consider impacts of natural events vs. fisheries management on the ecosystem, including the human component (socioeconomic and subsistence) of fishing communities.	Scoping Meeting Comment ID# E1, E2, J3, J4, A5, A11, A21, A22, A23, K9, K21, K26, S18, S26, S54, S56, O1, O2  Letter ID# 01-101, 105-194, 210-214, 228-231, 287-327, 102-104, 194, 199, 200, 201, 204-208, 225-227, 232-237, 239, 240, 242, 244-248, 251, 254-258, 260-264, 266, 267, 270-286, 328-332, 336, 338-350, 353, 356, 358-361, 365-376, 379-383, 386, 388, 390-396, 399-402, 405-410, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418

**Kodiak Meeting:** The third public scoping meeting was held on November 10, 1999 in Kodiak, Alaska. Approximately 13 people were in attendance, including members of the project team and representatives from NMFS. Copies of the sign-in sheets from the meeting are included in Appendix E.

**Seattle Meeting:** The fourth public scoping meeting was held on November 12, 1999 in Seattle, Washington. Approximately 20 people were in attendance, including members of the project team and representatives from NMFS. Copies of the sign-in sheets from the meeting are included in Appendix E.

#### **4.3 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM OTHER SCOPING MEETINGS**

On January 7, 2000, NMFS met with representatives from Earthjustice to receive additional scoping comments. The issues that were discussed are summarized in Table 1.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY OF WRITTEN COMMENTS**

December 15, 1999 was the closing date of the formal scoping period. As of the date of this report, 420 written responses were received from interested or affected parties. Many of the responses presented issues for analysis; they have been categorized and included in Table 1. A more detailed summary of comments received through written correspondence is included in Appendix I.

#### **4.5 SYNTHESIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF KEY ISSUES**

As described in Sections 4.1 through 4.4, a review of all the scoping comments suggested twenty-three issues categories for purposes of aggregating comments and considering how best to address them in the SEIS (Table 1). It is NMFS's intent to address all of the issues brought up during scoping in the SEIS to the extent practical, some in more detail than others. Table 2 lists the twenty-three issue categories and provides NMFS's description of how the issue will most likely be addressed in the document.

The review of public comments (Table 1) clearly indicate that among the twenty-three issues categories, there exist a subset of issues that appear to be more frequently mentioned and suggest that these issues are the most important to the public. NMFS has identified these eight key issues as:

- The effects of the groundfish fisheries on target species
- The effects of the groundfish fisheries on forage fish species
- The effects of the groundfish fisheries on habitat
- The effects of the groundfish fisheries on marine mammals
- The effects of the groundfish fisheries on seabirds
- The effects of the groundfish fisheries on people and fishing communities
- The effects of the groundfish fisheries on the marine ecosystem
- The cumulative effects of the groundfish fisheries

**TABLE 2  
RESOLUTION OF COMMENTS**

Categorical Issues		Agency Decision on Comments Received
NEPA PROCESS		
1	Comments on the proposed NEPA schedule; it needs to provide sufficient time for analyses, consultation and coordination, and public review.	At this time, NMFS believes that the schedule is sufficient to prepare the draft SEIS and give the public adequate time to review and comment. The schedule was influenced greatly by the agency's need to have a draft SEIS that can be used as a reference document in support of management actions beginning with the 2001 fishery.
2	Comments on the purpose and use of the SEIS.	NMFS has clarified the purpose and need of this programmatic SEIS in Section 1.1 of the Scoping Report.
3	Proposed scope of alternatives is too narrow, predetermined, or biased toward maintaining status quo. Subalternatives proposed during scoping range from status quo to more restrictive management.	NMFS has rewritten the programmatic alternatives based on comments and issues raised during scoping. Refer to Section 5.2 of the Scoping Report.
4	The organization of alternative management measures by themes during scoping was confusing. Comments on objectives of scoping process.	In part, as a result of the public scoping process, NMFS has re-written the programmatic alternatives to better reflect the policy aspect of this SEIS. Technical workgroups were established for the purpose of developing hypothetical management regimes (i.e., suite of primary management tools) that are aimed at achieving a particular policy emphasis. Analysis of these hypothetical regimes, are intended to illustrate the likely environmental effects of alternative policy objectives within an overarching policy framework. The SEIS will provide the decision-maker and the public with information on the benefits (and costs) of alternative management policies. It is intended that NMFS be able to tier off this programmatic SEIS in the future as subsequent proposals are evaluated on specific management measures and/or regimes.
5	How will the scoping report and SEIS be structured?	Refer to the draft outline contained in Section 5.1 of this report.

**TABLE 2 (Cont.)  
RESOLUTION OF COMMENTS**

Categorical Issues		Agency Decision on Comments Received
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF SEIS ALTERNATIVES</b>		
6	Develop alternatives that further reduce groundfish bycatch (including prohibited species catch [PSC]), waste of resources, and the race for fish.	Reducing bycatch, waste, and the race for fish are at least secondary objectives for two of the hypothetical management regimes. See Section 5.2 on alternatives resulting from scoping later in this report. The “race of fish” issue has had a significant influence on the evolution of the FMPs, and remains an issue today. As such, NMFS will describe this issue in both the historical and present-day context, and evaluate at least one alternative regime that would be aimed at further addressing this issue.
7	Further reduce fishing capacity.	Alternative 6 has reducing fishing capacity as a primary objective. The effect of each of the alternative regimes on fishing capacity will be assessed.
8	Biological uncertainty should factor into management, consider precautionary and the effectiveness of adaptive management.	The issue of uncertainty and its implications for fisheries management will be addressed in the SEIS.
9	Protect vulnerable species (those protected under Endangered Species Act, Steller sea lions, etc.)	The merits of additional protection of ESA-listed species will be analyzed both as a policy objective as well as an overarching issue in the subsequent analyses of alternative regimes.
10	Examine effectiveness of spatial, time, area, and gear management.	Use of a spatial/temporal/gear approach to managing fisheries will be examined within the context of achieving a particular policy emphasis. NMFS expects that the results of this analysis can be informative, regardless of policy objectives, in determining the effectiveness of such a combination of tools.
11	Comments that the subalternatives are inadequate. Suggestions for methodology for developing alternatives. Recommendation that only reasonable alternatives should be considered.	In response to public and agency comment, NMFS has revised the alternatives for this SEIS. See Section 5.2 on alternatives later in this report.
12	Under allocation alternatives, consider TAC allocations to small boat/coastal communities.	In response to public and agency comment, NMFS has re-written the alternatives for this SEIS. TAC allocations to fishing communities will be considered as an element of the expanded use of fishing cooperatives.
13	Considering restricting large vessels in nearshore areas to benefit coastal communities.	NMFS intends to examine the socioeconomic effects of allocating TAC to fishing cooperatives. Once allocated, it would be up to the cooperative itself to determine how best to distribute the TAC among its participants. Therefore, we will not be examining this proposal specifically in this SEIS.

**TABLE 2 (Cont.)  
RESOLUTION OF COMMENTS**

<b>Categorical Issues</b>		<b>Agency Decision on Comments Received</b>
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF SEIS ALTERNATIVES (Cont.)</b>		
14	Time/area closures – modify seasonal/area restrictions to accommodate needs of small boat and coastal communities.	NMFS intends to examine the socioeconomic effects of allocating TAC to fishing cooperatives. Once allocated, it would be up to the cooperative itself to determine how best to distribute the TAC among its participants. Therefore, we will not be examining this proposal specifically in this SEIS.
15	Consider bottom trawl and gear-limitations as a strategy to further protect benthic habitat EFH/HAPC).	In response to public and agency comment, NMFS will consider these type of measures as part of the analyses of Alternative 5.
16	Range of suggested definitions for proposed action and the no action alternative.	NMFS has re-written the statement to read, “NMFS defines the proposed action as the management of groundfish fisheries off Alaska and the authorization of groundfish fishing activities off Alaska pursuant to approved FMPs.”
17	Examine ecosystem-based management as an alternative.	NMFS believes our proposed range of alternatives all encompass elements of a ecosystem-based management regime.
18	Consider fish size limits for permissible catch as a possible management measure.	In response to public and agency comment, NMFS has re-written the alternatives for this SEIS. NMFS considered the use of fish size limits as a management measure when developing hypothetical regimes for analysis. In all cases, NMFS determined that other management measures would be more efficient in achieving policy objectives. Therefore, this SEIS will not pursue the use of fish size limits, although nothing prevents the public from proposing fish size limits under the current FMP.
<b>DISCUSSION OF AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/BACKGROUND</b>		
19	How has the <i>Exxon Valdez</i> oil spill affected groundfish fisheries?	The analysis will contain a discussion of the cumulative effects of the groundfish fisheries on fish species when combined with oil and gas development activities.
20	Include observer program in analysis.	The domestic observer program is but one of many categorical management tools authorized in the FMPs. A summary of the program will be provided as part of the description of the current regime. Use of, and modification of, the observer program will be a primary element of several of the alternative management regimes.
21	Examine fishery wastes/offal.	NMFS intends to examine this issue and will provide both a description of what currently is known and its effects in the SEIS.

**TABLE 2 (Cont.)  
RESOLUTION OF COMMENTS**

<b>Categorical Issues</b>		<b>Agency Decision on Comments Received</b>
<b>DISCUSSION OF AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/BACKGROUND (Cont.)</b>		
22	Examine the sustainability of fisheries.	The sustainability of fisheries is a major goal of NMFS and Congress. The SEIS will present information on annual harvests of Alaska groundfish under management of the FMPs. NMFS will assess to what extent the current regime is achieving the sustainability goal and what benefits and risks exist with alternative regimes.
23	Examine how TAC is established, including accounting systems and methods and the basis for setting quotas.	NMFS will provide a description of the TAC setting process in the SEIS.
24	Provide a historical review of fisheries management changes and correlation with weather patterns, species distribution, technological advances, etc.	The SEIS will contain an overview of the history of the Alaska groundfish fisheries, the ecosystem, and the FMPs.
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT</b>		
25	Scope must include not only additive effects of piecemeal management actions over time, but also the cumulative effects of the management regime as a whole.	NMFS recognizes that the cumulative effects analysis will be a major component of this programmatic SEIS. The cumulative effects of the groundfish fisheries will be extensively studied and will be presented in the SEIS.
26	Consider impacts of natural events vs. fisheries management on the ecosystem, including the human component (socioeconomic and subsistence) of fishing communities.	NMFS agrees. To the extent that data is available, NMFS will determine the effects of the groundfish fisheries on the entire ecosystem. When data is not available, NMFS will mention this and describe the potential effects of the fisheries in absence of such information. NMFS defines the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska ecosystem as a complex system that is composed of a number of components, including humans. As such, the analysis will include an assessment of effects of the current and alternative regimes upon humans and fishing communities. Information on the North Pacific and Bering Sea ecosystem and affected human communities will be provided in the SEIS. NMFS plans on providing a discussion of how each alternative to the current management regime would alter the effects of the groundfish fisheries on the ecosystem, people, and fishing communities. This will be done in the Environmental Consequences chapter of the SEIS.

NMFS intends to draw attention to the eight key issues in the SEIS by preparing issue-specific sections in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences. In this way, each of the alternative policies being considered in this SEIS will be evaluated within the specific context of the key issue. Furthermore, the decision-maker and the public can more easily focus on issues important to them in the document.

## **5.0 SEIS STRUCTURE AND CONTENT**

### **5.1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE SEIS**

The President's Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) prepared the implementing regulations for NEPA. Included in those regulations is a recommended format for organizing an EIS (40 CFR 1502.10). Federal agencies are given the flexibility to modify the standard format to encourage good analysis and provide for a clear presentation of the alternatives including the proposed action. A draft outline has been prepared for the Alaska Groundfish Programmatic SEIS that encompasses all of the required elements for an SEIS, but organizes the presentation of information, alternatives, and issues in a way that best meets the needs of this project (Appendix J).

The draft SEIS outline should be viewed as a work in progress, and is not provided in more detail at this stage in the project because many sections and subsections are likely to change, be moved, or be added to as analysts prepare the draft SEIS. However, in its present form, the draft SEIS outline illustrates how NMFS intends to organize topics and structure the document.

### **5.2 ALTERNATIVES RESULTING FROM SCOPING**

CEQ and NOAA define a programmatic EIS to be an analysis of alternative management policies or programs (national or regional). NOAA's own NEPA guidelines (NAO 216-6 Section 5.09a) state that " a programmatic environmental review should analyze the broad scope of actions within a policy or programmatic context by defining the various programs and analyzing the policy alternatives under consideration and the general environmental consequences of each."

To best illustrate the likely environmental effects of implementing alternative management policies, NMFS has identified certain objectives as "primary objectives" as a method of defining the "policy emphasis" for each alternative. The policy objectives were compiled from comments received during scoping that expressed which environmental issues the public wanted to see addressed in the SEIS. By constructing each alternative around a different policy emphasis, the environmental issues can be clearly defined and examined.

Analysis of the impacts of management policies requires knowledge of potential actions that could be taken to implement the policy. Policies are, by definition, a high-level, overall statement or plan embracing the general goals and procedures of a government body. In the United States, they usually reflect the values and wisdom of its citizens, as expressed by laws and agencies of the nation. Policy goals and objectives are often used to frame the policy and make the statement clearer and easier to understand. Still, determination of the effects of a policy on the human environment is difficult to comprehend and analyze without some indication of how the policy might be implemented.

The current management policy of the Council, which has been approved by NMFS and the Secretary of Commerce, is embodied in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs. A summary of the current management policy goals and objectives is provided in Appendix K. There are at least partially conflicting policy goals and objectives listed in the BSAI and GOA FMPs, which requires the decision-maker to strike an appropriate balance. The FMPs themselves, and their implementing regulations, serve as an example of how the current management policy has been implemented to manage the Alaskan groundfish fisheries. The FMPs and the regulations describe a "management regime". It is therefore logical, that a practical way of evaluating alternative policy objectives, is to construct hypothetical management regimes that can be compared to the current regime. In this way, the hypothetical regimes serve as an example of how a particular policy may be implemented and provide sufficient detail to allow for a comparative analysis and determination of environmental effects. This is the approach that NMFS has chosen to use for the programmatic SEIS. NMFS assembled a number of scientific and management experts to construct hypothetical management regimes that would be more effective and efficient in achieving a specific policy emphasis (an example of one policy emphasis would be to manage fisheries using measures that would promote protection and endangered species over other competing fishery considerations). Information provided on the environmental consequences of implementing each of the hypothetical regimes will assist the decision-maker and the public in determining whether the current management policy should continue, or whether a different management policy should be adopted.

Development of the hypothetical regimes incorporated suggestions from public comments received during scoping. The experts reviewed all of the categorical management measures authorized in each of the FMPs, and considered new measures not currently in use in management of the Alaska groundfish fisheries. For each regime, the experts identified the primary management tools and detailed measures they determined necessary to efficiently achieve a suite of policy objectives (i.e. policy emphasis). NMFS recognized that hundreds of hypothetical regimes could be developed. However, NMFS also recognized that attempting to consider a large number of management regimes would result in clouding the issues, make the analysis more complicated and confusing to the reader, and limit the depth of the analysis of each alternative. NMFS's selection of these management regimes is intended to represent, in a general way, the types of environmental effects one could expect should management policies of the Council, NMFS, the Secretary of Commerce, or Congress change. The actual characterization of the hypothetical regimes is not as important as learning more about the environmental trade-offs one can expect when considering alternative management policies governing the Alaska groundfish fisheries.

### **5.2.1 Programmatic Alternatives**

During the scoping process, NMFS received numerous comments suggesting that various policy goals and objectives should be given greater emphasis in the FMPs than is currently the case. Based upon these comments, NMFS has selected several important policy goals and objectives to serve as the basis for programmatic alternatives in this SEIS (Appendix K). These goals and objectives are derived from a review of a number of sources, including the MSFCMA, MMPA, ESA, NOAA-Fisheries Strategic Plan, NOAA-National Bycatch Plan, the NPFMC's Comprehensive Goals, the NPFMC working definition for ecosystem-based management, and the existing GOA and BSAI Groundfish FMPs themselves.

NMFS believes that the programmatic alternatives provide a range of alternatives that sharply defines the issues and provides a clear basis for choice.



### Alternative 1 (No Action) - Continue with the Existing Management Policy.

The current management policy affecting the Alaska groundfish fisheries can best be characterized by the GOA and BSAI FMPs and their implementing regulations. The current Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMP policy places primary emphasis on maximizing positive economic benefits to the United States, consistent with resource stewardship responsibilities for the continuing welfare of the Gulf of Alaska living marine resources. The Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish FMP's policy is more neutral. The SEIS will contain a historical review of the FMPs and describe the major influences that have affected the groundfish fisheries since initial implementation of the FMPs. The current regime, as defined by the existing plan and the regulations will serve as the baseline for evaluating the changes, in terms of environmental costs and benefits, of alternative policy regimes.

The current regime is comprised of about twenty-two categorical management measures, ranging from frameworked measures (e.g. those requiring a notice to implement) that the NPFMC uses to set TACs and PSCs, to more conventional measures (e.g. those requiring a FMP amendment to change) such as gear allocations, inshore-offshore allocations, and effort limitation. Table 3 lists the most important categorical management measures that define the current regime.

### Alternative 2 - Adopt a New Management Policy Framework that emphasizes increased protection to marine mammals and seabirds.

This policy would emphasize reducing conflicts and negative interactions between fishing activities and marine mammals and seabirds.

The regime that has been developed to best achieve this policy emphasis is a combination of four primary categorical management measures: TAC Setting; Spatial/Temporal Management; Gear Restrictions; and Adaptive Management. One approach contemplates taking a relatively large TAC and distributing it over time and space by constraining catch to a low daily harvest rate. Another approach will consider setting a very low TAC at the outset. This TAC would be released in very short pulses with only moderate constraints on daily removals. The pulse fishery would be managed to provide for a lengthy rest period between harvests. Further details on these measures and regime are provided in Table 3. (Note these measures are being further refined and they are subject to change as the analysis continues.)

### Alternative 3 - Adopt a New Management Policy Framework that emphasizes increased protection to target groundfish species.

This alternative places greater emphasis on objectives aimed at preventing overfishing, maintaining healthy fish stocks of target species, and the rebuilding of depressed stocks of target species, while maximizing yield on a sustainable basis.

**TABLE 3  
PROPOSED MANAGEMENT REGIMES FOR ANALYTICAL PURPOSES**

Alternative 1 - Current Regime	Alternative - 2 Increase Protection MM/Seabirds	Alternative 3 - Increase Protection Target Species	Alternative 4 - Increase Protection Non-Target/ Forage Species	Alternative 5 - Increase Protection To Habitat/EFH	Alternative 6 - Increase Long-Term Socioeconomic Benefits
<b>MANAGEMENT TOOLS</b>					
<p><u>OY and TAC Setting Process</u> PSC Limits and Seasonal Allocations Inseason Time/Area Closures Gear Allocations Inshore/offshore Allocations Gear Restrictions Fishing Area Restrictions Effort Limitation Programs Observer Program Improved Retention/ Improved Utilization Programs Habitat Protection Measures Catch/Processing Restrictions (Complete list of management tools can be found in FMP's</p>	<p><u>Reduced TAC</u> <b>Option A: Low and slow approach</b> – Revised buffer zones – Spatial/temporal distribution – TAC reduction – Analysis will use BSAI pollock, Atka mackerel, cod fisheries as examples  <b>Option B: Short burst approach</b> – Large TAC reduction at the outset – No new buffer zones (1998 scenario holds) – No new spatial distribution – Season length &lt;forage trip – Daily limit=mean from previous years – Analysis will use BSAI/GOA pollock, cod, Atka mackerel as examples <u>Gear Restrictions</u> Seabird avoidance and reduced take  <u>Adaptive management</u></p>	<p><u>TAC Setting Process</u> – incorporate MSST into FMP's – incorporate survey biomass uncertainty – incorporate multi-species advice – evaluate MSY  <u>Time/Area Closures</u> Increase use of time/area closures – close spawning areas during spawning seasons – more protection areas  <u>Gear Modifications/ Restrictions</u> – increase selectivity to reduce harvest of immature fish Analysis will use BSAI/GOA pollock, cod, sablefish YFS, flathead, rocksole, Arrowtooth, POP, Atka mackerel as examples</p>	<p><u>Management/Species Category</u> – Establish a bycatch only category for all species not currently managed – Managed with assemblage MRB/ TAC – Priority non-targets managed with species/group TAC or time/area closure, depending on data – Priority based on ecosystem/ vulnerability criteria  <u>Gear Modifications/ Restrictions</u> – Use gear modification to reduce bycatch (eg halibut excluder device)  Analysis will use BS squid and GOA/BSAI skates as examples</p>	<p><u>Gear Restrictions</u> – Trawl gear not allowed for species that can be commercially harvested by fixed gear (cod) – Allow only pelagic trawl gear for species that can be taken commercially by this gear. Analysis will use dusky, NR, POP, pollock as examples  <u>Closed areas</u> Restrict all gear types to historic areas with highest effort, modified by – existing closures – scientific closures – other sensitive habitat areas inside (HAPC) – analysis will look at BSAI and GOA Marine Protective Areas as examples  <u>TAC settings</u> – reduce TAC by effort outside  <u>Observer Program/ data collection modifications</u></p>	<p><u>Cooperatives</u> – Expand co-ops to all groundfish fisheries</p>

The regime that has been developed to best achieve this policy emphasis is comprised of three primary categorical management measures: TAC Setting Process; Time/Area Closures; and Gear Modifications/Restrictions. Further details on these measures and regime are provided in Table 3. (Note these measures are being further refined and they are subject to change as the analysis continues.)

Alternative 4 - Adopt a New Management Policy Framework that emphasizes increased protection to non-target and forage fish species.

This alternative places greater emphasis on maintaining healthy fish stocks of non-target species and forage fish, reducing bycatch and bycatch mortality, reducing waste and discards, and using a precautionary approach when making decisions.

The regime that has been developed to best achieve this policy emphasis is one that would establish a "bycatch-only" category for all non-target species not currently managed. As is currently done for the forage fish category, a maximum retainable bycatch rate (MRB) would be applied to all non-target species. Other categorical measures of this regime include: Time/Area Closures; and Gear Modifications. Further details on these measures and regime are provided in Table 3. (Note that these measures are being further refined and they are subject to change as the analysis continues.)

Alternative 5 - Adopt a New Management Policy Framework that emphasizes increased protection to habitat, including Essential Fish Habitat.

This alternative would place greater emphasis on the objectives to protect, conserve, and restore living marine resource habitat.

The regime that has been developed to best achieve this policy emphasis is one that is comprised of four primary management measures: Gear Restrictions; Closed Areas; TAC Setting; and modifications to the Observer Program and other data collection programs. Further details on these measures and regime are provided in Table 3. (Note that these measures are being further refined and they are subject to change as the analysis continues.)

Alternative 6 - Adopt a New Management Policy Framework that emphasizes an increase in long-term socioeconomic benefits.

This alternative would place greater emphasis on the objectives to maximize economic benefits to the nation; increase long-term socioeconomic benefits to harvester, processors, and consumers by promoting efficiency, reducing waste, reducing the race-for-fish, and provides for the sustained participation of fishing communities.

The regime that was developed to best achieve this policy emphasis is one that is comprised of one primary management measure: expand Allocations to cooperatives by species or species group. This measure is being further refined and is subject to change as the analysis continues.

### **5.3 SCHEDULE**

NMFS has determined that the draft programmatic SEIS be published and available for public review by late October 2000. A 45-day review period will ensue once the draft SEIS is completed, and a final SEIS will be prepared and published by August 2001 (see Appendix L). This schedule is a reflection of the agency's commitment to this project and the need to address key issues raised during litigation and scoping.