



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
THE DIRECTOR

DEC 20 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR: Scott B. Gudes
Deputy Under Secretary for
Oceans and Atmosphere
William T. Hogarth

FROM: William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.

SUBJECT: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on
the Environmental Assessment for the Total
Allowable Catch Specifications for the Year
2002 Alaska Groundfish Fisheries

NMFS is implementing total allowable catch (TAC) specifications for 2002 by emergency interim rule in order to manage and conserve the groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone off Alaska. The attached environmental assessment (EA) analyzed a range of alternatives for setting TAC from no fishing to the maximum permissible level based on Amendment 56/56 to the BSAI and GOA groundfish fishery management plans. Section 2.0 of the EA contains a detailed description of the alternatives analyzed. The preferred alternative is Alternative 2, which is the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) recommended TAC for each groundfish species or species group. Alternative 2 describes TAC levels as a fraction of the maximum permissible value based on considerations unique to the fish stock and these levels of TAC are implemented by this action.

50 CFR part 679 and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) were considered in selecting the preferred alternative. Alternative 2 was chosen as the preferred alternative because it sets harvest limits within the optimal yield range specified in § 679.20(a)(1), and allows the optimal harvest of individual fish stocks based on the most recent scientific information and other considerations as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Alternatives 1 and 5 were not chosen because they resulted in TAC levels that exceed or were well below the BSAI and GOA optimal yield required by regulations. Alternative 4 was not chosen because it resulted in a TAC value for the GOA pollock that would exceed the overfishing level. Because Alternative 3 was based on a formula, it did not allow the TACs to be set in a manner that would optimize yield based on the latest scientific information. The analysis of

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES



Alternative 2 in the EA, identified no significant environmental or socioeconomic impacts on the human environment. Section 5.0 of the EA contains the significance evaluation and conclusions that support this FONSI.

Based on the subject EA, I have determined that no significant environmental impacts will result from the proposed action.

cc: NOAA OPP - Ramona Schreiber
North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Attachment - Environmental Assessment for the Total Allowable Catch Specifications for the Year 2002 Alaska Groundfish Fisheries, December 2001