

## **AI Fishery Ecosystem Plan – Council Action, June 2005**

The Council adopted the Ecosystem Committee's recommendations (see below) relative to the Aleutian Islands area-specific management discussion paper. The Council will further examine the development of an AI Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP), including the creation of an AI Ecosystem Plan Team.

In October, staff will bring back to the Council:

- possible contents and structure of an AI FEP
- an assessment of what information is already available in existing analyses such as the Groundfish PSEIS and the EFH EIS
- how the process involved in creating a FEP will work
- how an AI Ecosystem Plan Team might operate

The Council will also have more information at the October meeting on the status of national-level initiatives to require Fishery Ecosystem Plans, either in statutory guidelines or as part of revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Staff will meet again with the Ecosystem Committee before the October meeting to report progress and get feedback.

### ***Ecosystem Committee Recommendation – June 2, 2005***

The Ecosystem Committee recommends that the Council proceed with Option 3 of the discussion paper, to further examine the development of an Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan. The Committee also recommends that the Council include an element of Option 2, to create an Aleutian Islands Ecosystem Plan Team. The Committee anticipates that staff will begin by outlining some of the issues associated with developing a FEP, such as elements of the document, how the process would work, and how a plan team might be established. Staff should also consider the draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan provisions/guidelines being proposed by NOAA Fisheries. The Committee recommends that staff should present their progress on the Aleutian Islands FEP action to the Committee before presenting it before the Council.

### ***Purpose and Need Statement***

The Council has adopted the following purpose and need statement for this action, modified from the Ecosystem Committee's recommendation:

The Council recognizes that an explicit Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) is a desirable process for management of the marine fishery resources in the Alaskan EEZ and therefore is a concept that it wishes to continue to pursue and further implement. A primary component of an EAF is the development of ecosystem-based fishery planning documents, and the Council intends to move forward with such development on a pilot basis. The Council recognizes that the Aleutian Islands ecosystem is a unique environment that supports diverse and abundant marine life, and a human presence that is closely tied to the environment and its resources. The Council believes that in light of these features, EAF could be a useful guide for future fishery management decisions in the Aleutian Islands area. Enhancing our current ecosystem approach to fisheries in the Aleutian Islands could allow the Council to better focus on the unique features of and interactions within the Aleutian Islands ecosystem area.