



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

November 28, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR: The File

FROM: *For* James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region

SUBJECT: Categorical Exclusion from Requirements to Prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Rule to Revise Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements for the Alaska Groundfish Industry

I have determined that the revision to recordkeeping and reporting (R&R) requirements for the Alaska Groundfish Industry falls within the range and scope of alternatives addressed in previous environmental assessments. Furthermore, the action individually and cumulatively does not have the potential to pose significant threats to the human environment.

An environmental assessment/regulatory impact review/initial regulatory flexibility analysis (EA/RIR/IRFA) was prepared in 1989 for Amendments 13/18 to the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). These FMP amendments established the current FMP framework for a R&R program in the groundfish fisheries. These amendments made major changes to the recordkeeping and reporting requirements for the Alaska groundfish industry. The need and justification for such a system were discussed in the EA/RIR/IRFA prepared for Amendments 13/18 and a finding of no significant impact was made. An EA/RIR was prepared in 1994 for a regulatory amendment that updated the R&R regulations in early 1996 (61 FR 5608; February 13, 1996). Subsequent R&R regulatory amendments have fallen within the scope of alternatives and impacts addressed within the 1989 and 1994 EA documents. In addition to these two environmental documents, environmental analyses have been prepared for R&R regulatory changes connected to specific management actions.



This rulemaking falls within the scope of alternatives and impacts analyzed in both the 1989 and 1994 environmental documents for the following reasons. The proposed rule revises the R&R requirements established for the groundfish fisheries of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off Alaska at 50 CFR part 679.

The modification implemented by this action only would affect recordkeeping and reporting of fishing activities and would make no changes that affect the timing, frequency, location or manner in which gear is deployed nor alter the way in which any of the fisheries are prosecuted. The revisions will not substantively alter environmental impacts already analyzed within existing environmental documents.

Based on the above description, this action is categorically excluded under NAO 216-6 and the National Environmental Policy Act from both further analysis and requirements to prepare environmental documents.

Cc: NEPA Director, Policy and Strategic Planning