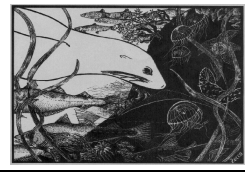


# ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERIES PROGRAMMATIC SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



*Project Newsletter No. 14  
September 2004*

## **PSEIS RECORD OF DECISION ISSUED**

On August 26, 2004, the National Marine Fisheries Service (hereinafter referred to as NOAA Fisheries), approved the Preferred Alternative recommended by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council at its April 2004 meeting, which is presented in the Final Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (PSEIS). This decision with the simultaneous approval of Amendments 74 and 81 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and the Bering Sea and Aleutians Islands Groundfish FMP respectively, implements a new management policy that is ecosystem-based and is more precautionary when faced with scientific uncertainty. The release of this Record of Decision brings to a close the public decision-making process as prescribed by the National Environmental Policy Act.

The management approach and the objectives in the Preferred Alternative reflect a conservative precautionary approach to fisheries management and communicate a policy direction for the future. The Preferred Alternative addresses public comments that were provided to the Agency on the 2001 Draft PSEIS, as well as comments provided by the public on the substantially revised 2003 Draft PSEIS. Public comments received on the Final PSEIS and the on the FMP Amendments were responded to in the Record of Decision. The public comments were broad-based, capturing views from the full spectrum of stakeholders. As a result, NOAA Fisheries takes pride in its efforts to exceed NEPA requirements through the public process it followed in restructuring the alternatives. The example FMP bookends (analyzed in Chapter 4 of the PSEIS) serve to illustrate management concepts and future actions that logically flow from the Preferred Alternative and provide sufficient detail to allow for focused analysis of their environmental consequences. NOAA Fisheries believes that release of the Final PSEIS in June 2004 provides the public and decision-makers with the information they need to understand the challenges in managing a complex fishery, the uncertainties being faced and how managers are addressing those uncertainties, and the value of the Alaska groundfish fisheries to the residents of Alaska,

the Pacific Northwest, and the Nation.

The Record of Decision can be viewed and downloaded by visiting our webpage at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov>. The June 2004 Final Alaska Groundfish Fisheries PSEIS can also be viewed on the webpage, however, due to its large size (approximately 6,000 pages) we recommend that you contact the Agency for either a CD or printed copy. Copies can be obtained by contacting Steven K. Davis, NOAA Fisheries, 222 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Room 517, Anchorage, AK 99513; phone number (907) 271-3523; email address: [steven.k.davis@noaa.gov](mailto:steven.k.davis@noaa.gov).

## **Programmatic Groundfish Policy Workplan**

In anticipation of Agency approval of FMP Amendments 81/74, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council developed a priority list for further implementing the new management policy for the groundfish FMPs. The list identifies six priority areas, in no particular order of importance: protection of habitat, bycatch reduction, protection of Steller sea lions, prevention of overfishing, ecosystem management, and improvement of data quality and management. Based on these general priorities, the Council has developed a workplan for implementing actions. The workplan, as well as the FMP management objectives from which the priorities are drawn, will be subject to annual Council review. The workplan is posted on the Council website ([www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc](http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc)) and will become part of staff tasking.

The Council also initiated a discussion paper on potential changes to the management of the Aleutian Islands area. The paper will evaluate area-specific biological, social, economic, and management issues, as well as review ongoing research and develop recommendations for an Aleutian Islands ecosystem plan. The paper is scheduled to be reviewed by the Council in late 2004 or early 2005.



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