



Essential Fish Habitat:

We've come a long way...

and we keep going and going....

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EFH in the Magnuson-Stevens Act

Purpose: to promote the protection of essential fish habitat in the review of projects conducted under Federal permits, licenses, or other authorities that affect or have the potential to affect such habitat.”

Definition: “*Essential fish habitat* means those **waters and substrate** necessary to fish for **spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity.**” - -

Three Key Elements of EFH Mandate

- Describe and identify EFH.
- Minimize to the extent practicable adverse effects of fishing and identify other actions for the conservation of such habitat.
- Provides for a consultation process for actions that may adversely affect EFH.

An aerial photograph showing a coastal wetland area. A multi-lane highway curves through the scene, separating a residential neighborhood with houses and trees from a large, dense area of green mangrove forest. The water in the wetland is dark, and the vegetation is a vibrant green. The title 'Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs)' is overlaid in white text on a dark blue background.

Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs)

- HAPCs are subsets of EFH that merit particular conservation focus.
- HAPCs are valuable tools for focusing management actions on specific areas.

The Rest of the EFH backdrop

- 2003 Pew Ocean Commission report
- 2004 U.S. Ocean Commission report
- 2005 Ocean Action Plan

How does EFH help?

- **Placed greater emphasis on habitat in the context of fishery management – ecosystem approach.**
- **Mandate spurred synthesis of diverse science for EFH conservation purposes.**
- **Consultation requirement encouraged greater agency communication and consideration of fish habitat.**

Successful examples

- Alaska's new HAPCs : proactive conservation that fishing and environmental interests support.
- New England Habitat closures that protect cod habitat permanently and minimize impacts to fishermen.

Room for Improvement? - Yes

- Took public comments on EFH regulations to see if they should be changed.
- Conducted internal review of some aspects of the EFH program.

Plan for 2005 and beyond

- Will not revise regulations at this time.
- Will make targeted changes to technical guidance to refine EFH and improve the way we address adverse impacts to EFH.
- Will continue to push for basic science and mapping for habitat distribution, species/habitat relationships, and impacts.



Question for you

How can the EFH program most effectively partner with you?