

14 Conclusions and Council action

The 5-year EFH review has been completed and is documented in this summary report (with the exception of recommendations from the Council's BSAI Crab Plan Team, which will be provided at the April Council meeting as a supplement to this report). At this stage, the Council's primary decision point will be to determine whether, based on the new information available in the last five years, revisions to any of the Council's FMPs are warranted, which would require initiation of FMP amendments and associated analysis.

The Council also decided, in June 2009, to delay the consideration of whether to initiate a new HAPC proposal cycle until the completion of the EFH 5-year review. Consequently, another decision point for the Council is to decide whether to set HAPC priorities, thus initiating a call for proposal for specific sites to define as HAPCs. Section 12 provides some guidance to the Council on HAPC priorities that have been suggested since the last HAPC proposal cycle, both within the Council process and as part of the EFH review.

In order to provide some guidance for the Council with respect to whether to initiate FMP amendments for revising EFH, the recommendations contained within the review are summarized in Table 22. If FMP amendments are initiated, the Council will go through the normal FMP amendment process, with the development of an analysis to support the amendment (to comply with NEPA and Regulatory Flexibility Act requirements, and EO 12866 if a change to the regulations is also anticipated), and initial review and final action by the Council. The considerations before the Council can be summarized as follows:

- Do the EFH descriptions and geographical distributions for individual species warrant revising in the FMP? Should the FMPs be revised to reflect new information on their life history, biological/habitat/ predator-prey associations, or fishery?
- Is a new evaluation of the adverse effects of fishing on EFH needed?
- Should any new conservation measures be considered to mitigate adverse effects of fishing?
- Should the conservation and enhancement recommendations for nonfishing threats to EFH be revised in the FMPs?
- Is there a need to identify new HAPC priority types, and thus initiate a call for proposals for candidate sites to be considered for special management as HAPCs?
- Does the Council want to identify new directions for EFH research for the next 5 years?

Table 22 Summary of recommended changes to the FMPs resulting from the EFH 5-year review

EFH component	Council FMP	Recommended change	Priority?
EFH descriptions of individual species	BSAI Groundfish	Amendments are recommended for all 24 species or complexes whose habitat is described in the FMP, to revise some aspect of the EFH description	The BSAI Plan Team provided recommendations about whether these amendments constitute low or higher priorities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisions for three species are identified as moderate priority amendments that have the potential to affect management of the species (because of a change to the geographical distribution of EFH, or to the way the species is managed within a complex). • The Team recommended deleting one EFH description from the FMP.
	GOA Groundfish	Amendments are recommended for all 24 species or complexes whose habitat is described in the FMP, to revise some aspect of the EFH description	As above, the GOA Plan Team provided recommendations about whether these amendments constitute low or higher priorities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisions for seven species are identified as high priority amendments, and five as moderate priority amendments that have the potential to affect management of the species (because of a change to the geographical distribution of EFH, or to the way the species is managed within a complex). • The Team recommended deleting one EFH description from the FMP.
	BSAI Crab	Amendments are recommended for all 5 species or complexes in the FMP, to revise general EFH and fishery information for each species, and to reconsider the conclusions of the effects of fishing evaluation.	The Crab Plan Team recommended, as a higher priority, that further evaluation of the conclusions regarding the effects of fishing on crab EFH be undertaken to decide whether the conclusions summarized in the FMP are valid (see also below)
	Scallop	An amendment is recommended for the one species whose habitat is described in the FMP, to revise aspects of the EFH description	The Scallop Plan Team recommended that this amendment be considered a higher priority, as a change to the geographical distribution of weathervane scallop EFH is proposed.
	Salmon	Amendments are recommended for all 5 species in the FMP, to revise some aspect of the EFH description	The proposed changes do not affect the geographical distribution of EFH for marine salmon species, therefore using the same rationale as the other Plan Teams, these may be considered to be low priority amendments.

EFH component	Council FMP	Recommended change	Priority?
Fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH	All Council FMPs	A general re-evaluation of the effects of fishing activities on EFH is not recommended. Recent research results are consistent with the habitat sensitivity and recovery parameters and distributions of habitat types used in the prior analysis of fishing effects for the EFH EIS. Fishing intensity has decreased overall, gear regulations have been designated to reduce habitat damage, and area closures have limited the expansion of effort into areas of concern. For crab species, however, re-evaluation is recommended.	The Crab Plan Team has identified concerns with the conclusions and methodology of the evaluation of effects of fishing specifically on crab stocks, and recommends that further analysis be undertaken.
Non-fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH	All Council FMPs	Amendments are recommended to update EFH conservation recommendations for 14 of 22 nonfishing activities.	Recommendations are used by NMFS to consult with other agencies about Federal activities affecting EFH; updating these recommendations may be important for accurate consultation.
HAPC identification	Potentially all Council FMPs	Review has provided some suggestions for HAPC priorities (see Sections 12.2 and 12.3).	The Council is not obligated to identify HAPCs, only to consider whether it is appropriate to do so.
Research and information needs	Potentially all FMPs	The Council's research priority objectives from 2005 have largely been met, however many of the research questions are still valid and remain to be investigated (see Section 13.1.1). The Council may wish to identify new objectives to guide EFH research over the next 5 years.	