

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director



ESTIMATED TIME 2 HOURS

DATE: November 26, 1999

SUBJECT: Groundfish SEIS

ACTION REQUIRED

Receive status report and comment on Notice of Intent.

BACKGROUND

NMFS prepared and issued a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the groundfish fisheries authorized under the groundfish plans for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands areas in December 1998. U.S. District Court ruled in Greenpeace v. NMFS that the 1998 SEIS was legally inadequate, and remanded the document to NMFS for further action consistent with the requirements of NEPA (Item C-6(a)). NMFS published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a programmatic SEIS on Federal groundfish fishery management in the EEZ waters off Alaska in the *Federal Register* October 1, 1999 (Item C-6(b)). The scope of the analysis is to include all activities addressing the conduct of groundfish fisheries authorized and managed under both FMPs. As promised in the NOI, NMFS published a supplementary notice on November 3, 1999 (Item C-6(c)) that presents a number of thematic alternatives for purposes of scoping and to stimulate public comment. This notice also announced NMFS's response to the Council's October request to extend the public scoping period; which was extended an additional 30-days, or until December 15, 1999.

Since the last Council meeting, NMFS has developed a proposed work schedule and held a series of scoping meetings during the week of November 8-12, 1999, in Juneau, Anchorage, Kodiak, Alaska, and in Seattle, Washington. A copy of the schedule is provided as Item C-6 (d). NMFS staff will present a summary of scoping comments received by the agency (to date) and be available to answer any questions concerning preparation of the programmatic Alaska Groundfish Fisheries SEIS Project. The Council may wish to provide comment on the issues, scope, schedule, and conceptual framework of the SEIS.

On August 6, 1999, United States District Court, Western District of Washington at Seattle (No. C98-492Z) remanded the NMFS 1998 Alaska Groundfish SEIS to NMFS for preparation of a programmatic SEIS consistent with the Court's July 13, 1999, Amended Order. Specifically:

- “1. NMFS shall prepare a comprehensive programmatic SEIS that defines the federal action under review as, among other things, all activities authorized and managed under the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and all amendments thereto, and that addresses the conduct of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish fisheries and the FMPs as a whole.
2. The SEIS will evaluate the significant changes that have occurred in the GOA and the BSAI groundfish fisheries, including the significant cumulative effects of environmental and management changes in the groundfish fisheries since the issuance of the 1978 and 1981 EISs.
3. The SEIS will present a “general picture of the environmental effects of the [FMPs], rather than focusing narrowly on one aspect of them.” Amended Order at p.41. The SEIS does not have to consider detailed alternatives regarding each and every aspect of the FMPs.
4. The SEIS will provide reasonable management alternatives, as well as an analysis of their impacts, so as to “sharply defin[e] the issues and provid[e] a clear basis for choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public.” 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14. See Amended Order at p. 38.
5. In preparing the programmatic SEIS, NMFS will comply with the public participation requirements of NEPA and its implementing regulations.
6. NMFS will publish a notice of intent to prepare the programmatic SEIS in the Federal Register by October 1, 1999. The public scoping period will run, at a minimum, from October 1 to November 15, 1999. NMFS may extend the public scoping period beyond November 15, 1999 if it deems such an extension to be appropriate. The Court will, at a later time, issue an order scheduling a deadline for issuance of the final programmatic SEIS.
7. NMFS will file written reports regarding the progress of its NEPA process every 60 days, starting from the date of this Order.”

9:00 p.m. and October 21, 1999 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon; and Kansas City, MO, October 27, 1999, from 12:00 Noon to 9:00 p.m. Specific locations for each city are detailed in the next section.

ADDRESSES. Procedures for pre-registering for and testifying at these public hearings are detailed in the "Hearings Procedures" subsection of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section.

ADDRESSES: EPA's public hearings to receive comments on the Agency's proposed radiation protection standards for Yucca Mountain, Nevada will be held on October 13, 1999, at the Ronald Reagan Building (Federal Triangle Metro Stop), International Trade Center, Hemisphere B Meeting Room, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC; on October 19, 1999, at the Amargosa Valley Community Center, 821 East Farm Road, Amargosa Valley, NV; on October 20 and 21, 1999 at the Las Vegas Conference Suites and Services, Room 111, 101 Convention Center Drive, Las Vegas, NV; and on October 27, 1999, at the Kansas City Convention Center, Conference Center—Room 4201, 14th Street between Wyandotte and Central, Kansas City, MO.

EPA's official docket for this rule, including technical support documents and other documents and materials relevant to this rule, are filed in Docket No. A-95-12 of the Air Docket, located in Room M-1500 (first floor in Waterside Mall near the Washington Information Center), U.S. EPA, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460-0001. EPA has also established "Information Files" for this rule at two locations in Nevada: the Government Publications Section of the Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, 4504 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV, and the Public Library in Amargosa Valley, NV.

As provided in EPA's regulations at 40 CFR Part 2, and in accordance with normal Air docket procedures, if copies of any docket materials are requested, a reasonable fee may be charged for photocopying.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rafaela Ferguson, Office of Radiation and Indoor Air, (202) 564-9362 or call EPA's 24-hour toll-free Yucca Mountain Information Line, 1-800-331-9477.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The U.S. Department of Energy is developing a potential geologic repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, for disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. As mandated by the Energy Policy Act of 1992, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed site-specific public health and safety

standards for the potential repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. On August 27, 1999, EPA published the proposed radiation protection standards for Yucca Mountain, Nevada in the **Federal Register** at 64 FR 46976-47016. Simultaneously, a 90-day public comment period on the Agency's proposed rule began. The public comment period closes November 26, 1999. Once EPA's standards are finalized, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is responsible for implementing those standards.

Hearings Procedures

Persons wishing to testify at the public hearings are requested to pre-register by calling EPA's toll-free Yucca Mountain Information Line at 1-800-331-9477 between the hours of 12:00 Noon and 7:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) with the following information: Name/Organizational Affiliation (if any)/hearing date, location, time(s) available to testify, and a daytime telephone number. In order to obtain a scheduled speaking time, requests must be received by EPA no later than 7:00 p.m. EST October 12, 1999 for the hearings in Washington, DC; October 18, 1999 for the hearings in Amargosa Valley and Las Vegas, NV; and October 22, 1999, for the hearings in Kansas City, MO. Speakers not registered in advance may register at the door. Individuals testifying on their own behalf will be allowed 5 minutes. One individual may testify as the official representative or spokesperson on behalf of groups and organizations and will be allocated ten minutes for an oral presentation. Time allowed is exclusive of any time consumed by questions from the government panel and answers to these questions. Testimony from individuals and representatives of organizations is limited to one hearing location. Substitutions will not be permitted for any pre-registered person. Registrants will not be permitted to yield their time to other individuals or groups, nor will hearing time be used to "read into the record" testimony from individuals not present at the hearings. In the event any person wishes to enter comments for the record, but either cannot or does not appear personally at the hearings, written comments will be accepted by EPA during the hearings. These written comments will be considered to the same extent as oral testimony and will be included as part of the official hearings transcripts. The hearing transcript will constitute the official record of the hearings. Written comments submitted outside of the public hearings must be received by EPA Docket No. A-95-12 in

Washington, DC by November 26, 1999. All comments received by EPA, whether written or oral, will be given equal consideration in development of the final rule.

Dated: September 27, 1999.

Robert Brenner,

Acting Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation.

[FR Doc. 99-25566 Filed 9-30-99; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[I.D. 092799E]

Groundfish Fisheries of the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of intent; scoping meetings; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces its intention to prepare a programmatic supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) on Federal groundfish fishery management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters off Alaska. The scope of the analysis will include all activities addressing the conduct of groundfish fisheries authorized and managed under two of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's fishery management plans (FMPs): Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), and amendments thereto; and Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (BSAI), and amendments thereto.

NMFS will hold scoping meetings to receive public input on the structure of the alternatives and the range of issues to be covered in the programmatic SEIS. NMFS is accepting written comments on the same topics.

DATES: Written comments will be accepted through November 15, 1999 (see ADDRESSES). See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**, Public Involvement for meeting dates.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and requests to be included on a mailing list of persons interested in the programmatic SEIS should be sent to Lori Gravel, Sustainable Fisheries Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802. Comments may also be hand-

delivered to Room 457-1 Federal Office Building, 907 West 9th Street, Juneau, AK. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**, Public Involvement for meeting locations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Davis, NMFS, (907) 271-3523.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the United States has exclusive fishery management authority over all living marine resources found within the EEZ, except marine mammals and birds. The management of these marine resources is vested in the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary). Eight Regional Fishery Management Councils prepare FMPs for approval and implementation by the Secretary. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has the responsibility to prepare FMPs for the fishery resources that require conservation and management in the EEZ off Alaska. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council consists of Federal and state officials having authority for fishery management, and of private persons nominated by the governors of the States of Alaska, Oregon, and Washington, and appointed by the Secretary.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires preparation of environmental impact statements (EISs) for major Federal actions significantly impacting the quality of the human environment. 40 CFR 1502.9(c) states: "Agencies shall prepare supplements to either draft or final environmental impact statements if: (i) The agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or (ii) There are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts."

The Council prepared, and the Secretary approved, the Fishery Management Plan for Gulf of Alaska Groundfish in 1978 and the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area in 1981. EISs were prepared for those FMPs and were filed in 1978 and 1981, respectively. Both FMPs have been amended numerous times. NEPA environmental documents (categorical exclusion, environmental assessments, or EISs) have been prepared for each FMP amendment and regulatory amendment. Additionally, NMFS prepared and issued an SEIS for the groundfish fisheries authorized under both FMPs in December 1998. In July 1999, the U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington at

Seattle (NO. C98-0492Z) ruled in *Greenpeace v. NMFS* that the 1998 SEIS was legally inadequate, and remanded the document to NMFS for further action consistent with the requirements of NEPA.

In this document, NMFS announces its intent to prepare a programmatic SEIS that defines the Federal action under review as, among other things, all activities authorized and managed under the FMPs and all amendments thereto, and that addresses the conduct of the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries and the FMPs as a whole. NMFS will present in the SEIS an overview and an assessment of all impacts (including environmental, biological, and socio-economic) that result from directed and incidental groundfish harvest regulations affecting amount of harvest, location of harvest, time of harvest, method of harvest, distribution of harvest among fishermen, use of the harvest, and methods used to monitor harvest and the fisheries. Also, NMFS will identify and evaluate the significant changes that have occurred in the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries, including significant cumulative effects of environmental and management changes in the groundfish fisheries since the issuance of the 1978 and 1981 EISs. Further, NMFS will also analyze the impacts (including environmental, biological and socio-economic) resulting from the current fishery management regime, and reasonable alternatives to the current management regime. The Responsible Program Manager for this SEIS is Steven Pennoyer, Alaska Regional Administrator, NMFS.

Alternatives

The SEIS will consider a range of alternative harvest management regimes, incorporating variations on various elements of the FMPs. It will not consider detailed alternatives for every aspect of the FMPs. A principal objective, therefore, of the scoping and public input processes is to identify a reasonable set of programmatic management alternatives that, with adequate analysis, will sharply define critical issues and provide a clear basis for choice among the alternatives.

Management of the GOA and the BSAI groundfish fisheries pursuant to the FMPs involves decision making that can result in changes to the harvest management strategy. Accordingly, in the programmatic SEIS, NMFS will consider a full range of management alternatives, including the No Action alternative (i.e., the management regime currently in place would continue to apply), and evaluate their potential

environmental impacts (including biological and socio-economic). Through this scoping process, NMFS requests public input on the management alternatives that should be considered in this programmatic SEIS. Prior to the scoping meetings, NMFS will publish in the *Federal Register* draft alternatives to be developed further at the public scoping meetings and in the programmatic SEIS.

Issues

The environmental consequences section of the EIS will display the impacts of groundfish harvest accruing with present management regulations and under a range of representative alternative management regulations on North Pacific and Bering Sea ecosystem issues. These issues include: (1) Marine habitat, (2) major species of fish, (3) major species and groups of invertebrates, (4) marine mammals, (5) seabirds, and (6) cumulative and synergistic impacts on species across the foodweb. In addition, the environmental consequences section will contain summary, interpretation, and predictions for socio-economic issues associated with conduct of those fisheries on the following groups of individuals: (1) Those who participate in harvesting the groundfish resources and other living marine resources, (2) those who process and market the fish and fishery products, (3) those who are involved in allied support industries, (4) those who consume fishery products, (5) those who rely on living marine resources in the management area either for subsistence needs or for recreational benefits, (6) those who benefit from non-consumptive uses of living marine resources, (7) those involved in managing and monitoring fisheries, and (8) fishing communities.

Consultations

Pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), consultations for listed species and critical habitat affected by these fisheries have been or will be initiated and will be prepared in parallel with development of the programmatic SEIS. These consultations will be conducted in accordance with the ESA and implementing regulations, 50 CFR 402 *et seq.*, and will analyze the individual and cumulative impacts of activities relating to the groundfish fisheries authorized and managed under the FMPs, and amendments thereto, to determine whether the cumulative impacts of the groundfish fisheries are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species, including Steller sea lions, or adversely modify

critical habitat. Results from these consultations will be incorporated into the SEIS to the maximum extent practicable. The schedule for completion of consultation will correspond generally to the schedule for the issuance of the programmatic SEIS as the information, evaluations, and conclusions that are required for both documents will be similar in many respects.

Public Involvement

Scoping for the programmatic SEIS begins with publication of this notice. An informational presentation of the project will be made during the Council's October meeting (Seattle, WA,

Seattle Airport, Doubletree Hotel, October 10 through 18, 1999.) Subsequent scoping meetings will be held in Anchorage, Juneau, Kodiak, and Seattle at the following times and locations:

1. Juneau—November 8, 1999, 1–3 p.m., Juneau Federal Building, Room 445, 709 West 9th Street, Juneau, AK.
2. Anchorage—November 9, 1999, 1–3 p.m., Anchorage Federal Building, Room 135, 222 West Seventh Avenue, Anchorage, AK.
3. Kodiak—November 10, 1999, 1–3 p.m., Kodiak Inn, 236 West Rezanof Drive, Kodiak, AK.
4. Seattle—November 12, 1–3 p.m., Alaska Fisheries Science Center, 7600

Sand Point Way NE, Building 4, Room 2039, Seattle, WA.

Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Rebecca Campbell (907) 586-7228 at least 5 days before the meeting dates.

Dated: September 27, 1999.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 99-25573 Filed 9-30-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

Crews, A.K. 1939. A study of the Oregon white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus leucurus* (Douglas). M.S. thesis. Oregon State College. Corvallis. 46 pp.

Gavin, T.A. 1984. Pacific Northwest. in: White-tailed deer, ecology and management. L.K. Halls, editor. A Wildlife Management Institute publication. Pages 491-492.

Gavin, T.A. 1978. Status of the Columbian white-tailed deer: some quantitative uses of biogeographic data. Pages 185-202 in: Threatened Deer. IUCN. Morges, Switzerland. 434 pp.

Oregon Department of Fish Wildlife. 1999. Deer census and population trend data. Unpublished ODFW report, Southwest Regional Office. 4 pages.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. 1995. Columbian white-tailed deer biological status assessment. Report to Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. 83 pp.

Smith, W.P. 1985. Current geographic distribution and abundance on the Columbian white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus leucurus* (Douglas). Northwest Science 59:243-251.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1983. Revised Columbian white-tailed deer recovery plan. Portland, Oregon. 75 pp.

Author: The primary author of this notice is Barbara Behan of the Regional Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97232-4181 (telephone 503/231-6131).

Authority

The authority of this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: October 26, 1999.

Thomas Dwyer,
Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.
[FR Doc. 99-28696 Filed 11-2-99; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[I.D. 102699G]

Groundfish Fisheries of the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notification of draft alternatives; extension of scoping and comment period.

SUMMARY: NMFS is publishing draft alternatives to be analyzed in a programmatic supplemental

environmental impact statement (SEIS) on Federal groundfish fishery management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off Alaska. This document also provides an extension of the scoping period from November 15 until December 15, 1999.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before December 15, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Lori Gravel, Sustainable Fisheries Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802. Comments may also be hand delivered to Room 457-1 Federal Office Building, 907 West 9 Street, Juneau, AK.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steven Davis, NMFS, (907) 271-3523 or steven.k.davis@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS published in the Federal Register, a notice of intent to prepare an SEIS on Federal groundfish fishery management in the EEZ off Alaska and announced scoping meetings (64 FR 53305, October 1, 1999). The reason for undertaking the analysis, and the issues to be analyzed, are detailed in the notice of intent and are not repeated here. In the notice, NMFS indicated that, prior to the scoping meetings, NMFS will publish in the Federal Register draft alternatives to be developed further during the scoping process.

NMFS manages the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries to achieve the goals and objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for the Groundfish Fisheries in the BSAI Area, and the Groundfish of the GOA. The goals and objectives reflect the complicated array of often competing concerns that affect the Alaska groundfish fisheries. In some instances, contradictory objectives are articulated within a single goal. For example, paraphrasing from the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the FMPs, we find they generally contain the following goals and objectives: Assure continuing availability of food supply and recreational opportunities; minimize irreversible adverse effects on fishery resources and the marine environment, including essential fish habitat; maximize economic benefits to the Nation and to the states; provide for sustained participation of fishing communities; minimize waste, reduce bycatch and the mortality of bycatch, encourage development of underused fisheries; control effort; promote

equitable allocations; keep management options open for the future; prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks; manage stocks as a unit; promote protection of the safety of human life at sea; promote regulatory and fishing efficiency; use the best available data; account for all fishery related removals. In deciding on particular new management measures, NMFS and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council review reasonable alternatives for achieving one or more of those goals and objectives, then base decisions according to the views of competing interests and concerns.

With this programmatic environmental impact analysis, NMFS will evaluate how successfully the current management regime achieves those goals and objectives. The SEIS will support these determinations by presenting an analysis of the environmental impacts of the current regime and compare them to configurations of alternatives management measures that would also achieve those goals and objectives.

Alternatives

NMFS has chosen to analyze broad thematic alternatives that will provide, in a programmatic sense, a conceptual framework for understanding how effectively alternative harvest management regimes achieve the articulated goals and objectives and what their environmental impacts would be. The SEIS will look at the themes: (1) Who harvests groundfish; (2) what groundfish is harvested; (3) when and where is groundfish harvested; and (4) how groundfish is harvested. Sub-alternatives will be developed for each theme. The alternatives and sub-alternatives NMFS is currently considering include the following:

Allocative Schemes (Who harvests groundfish?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo: Allocation of groundfish harvest is currently based on the species or species group and is made to individuals, cooperatives, and Olympic-style fisheries (i.e., non-Community Development Quota (CDQ), non-Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fisheries) by sector.

Sub-alternative 2 - IFQ: Expand or reduce allocations to individuals by species or species group.

Sub-alternative 3 - Cooperatives: Expand or reduce allocations to cooperatives by species or species group.

Sub-alternative 4 - Open access: Reduce or remove limited access systems.

Sub-alternative 5 - Allocation: Expand or reduce the use of sector allocations or alter the amounts of allocations.

Sub-alternative 6 - License Limitation: Expand or reduce the use of license limitation.

Harvest Level (What is harvested?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo: Total Allowable Catch levels (TACs) are set by species or species group and the sum of the TACs must stay within the OY of the groundfish complex.

Sub-alternative 2 - Increase the TACs: Set fishing mortality equal to the maximum acceptable biological catch (going above OY of the groundfish complex).

Sub-alternative 3 - Decrease the TACs: Set fishing mortality equal to 50 percent of the maximum acceptable biological catch.

Sub-alternative 4 - Stabilize the TACs: Set fishing mortality equal to the 1994-1998 average fishing mortality.

Sub-alternative 5 - Authorize zero harvest: Set the TACs at zero.

Time/Area Closures (When and Where does harvest occur?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo: Numerous time/area closure schemes are currently in use serving to achieve

various conservation objectives. Among the purposes served are closures to minimize fishery interactions with species listed under the Endangered Species Act, prohibited species, and crab habitat.

Sub-alternative 2 - Steller sea lion focus: Add additional closures based on their potential to minimize indirect interactions with Steller sea lion foraging habitat.

Sub-alternative 3 - Prohibited species focus: Add additional closures based on their potential to minimize take of prohibited species.

Sub-alternative 4 - Habitat focus: Add additional closures based on their potential to minimize disturbance of marine substrates.

Sub-alternative 5 - Market focus: Modify seasonal and area restrictions to increase value of harvest and/or improve the efficiency of fishing operations.

Gear Limitations (How is groundfish harvested?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo. Fishing gear as described in regulations with sector allocations made in annual total allowable catch specifications.

Sub-alternative 2 - Further restrict fishing gear contact with the sea floor by

banning non-pelagic trawl gear in flatfish fisheries.

Sub-alternative 3 - Restrict use of trawl, longline, and/or pot gear to habitat areas with substrates composed of unconsolidated sediments.

Sub-alternative 4 - Restrict authorized fishing gear to those capable of minimizing bycatch significantly below levels presently considered clean for each directed fishery.

Sub-alternative 5 - Allow all gear types and allow fishermen to select the most effective type.

Public Involvement

Scoping for the programmatic SEIS began with publication of a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* on October 1, 1999. This notice extends the scoping period from November 15, to December 15, 1999, to provide the public and NMFS with additional time to refine these alternatives.

Dated: October 27, 1999.

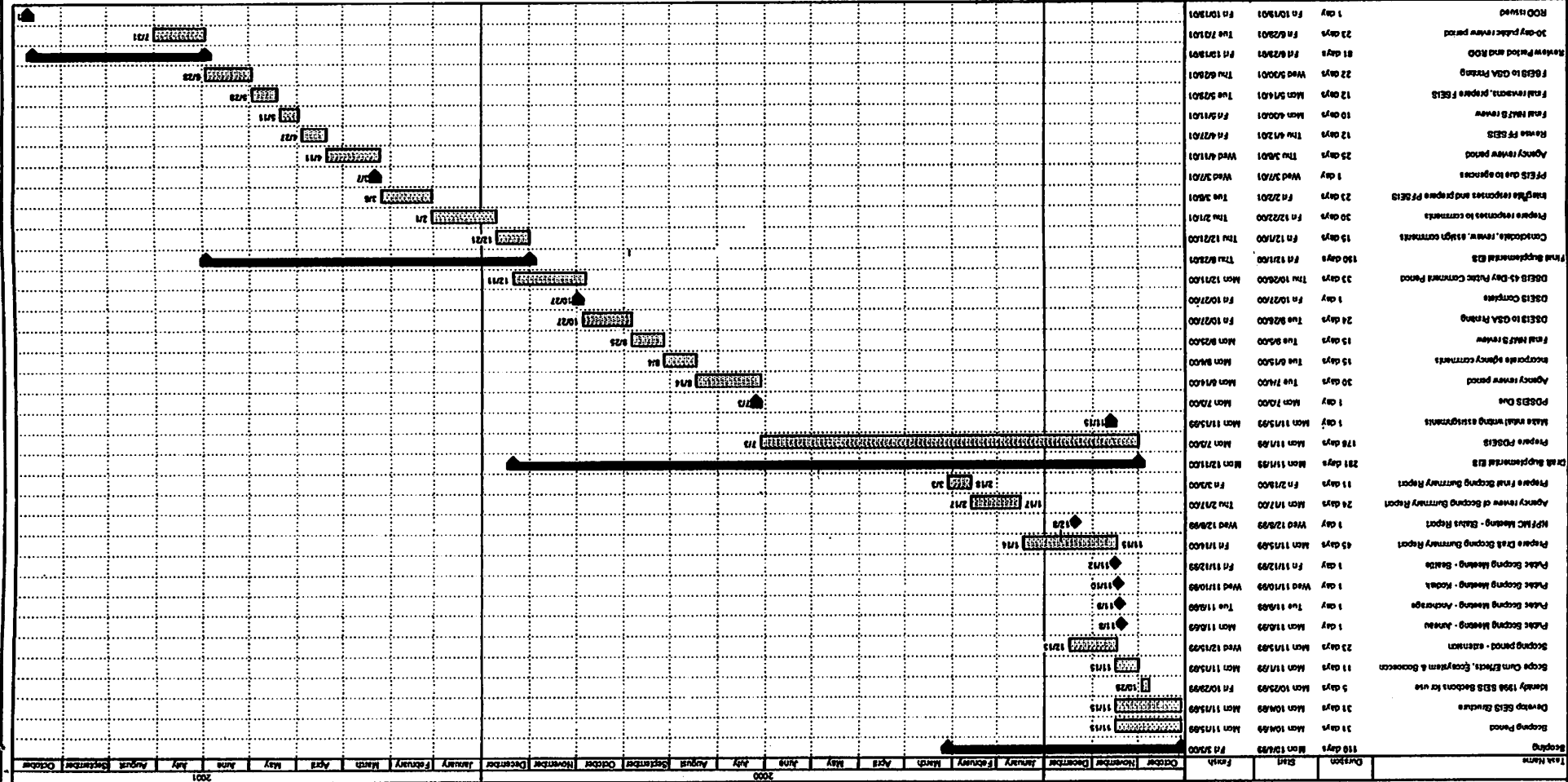
Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 99-28643 Filed 11-2-99; 8:45 am]

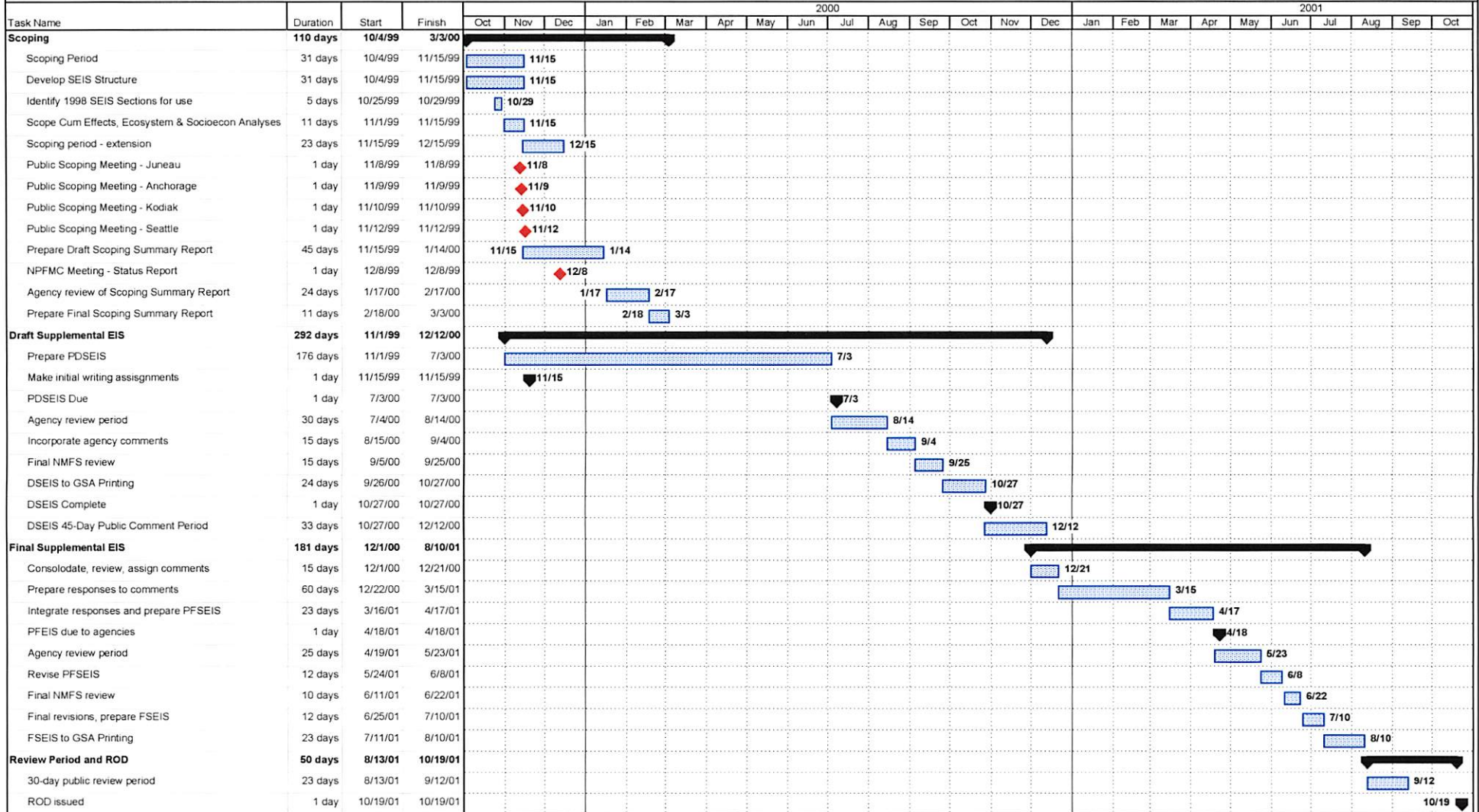
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PROJECT SCHEDULE - HAPS GROUNDWATER FISHBONE SEIS



Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
Scoping Period	118 days	Fri 3/30/00	Mon 10/4/00
Develop EIS Structure	31 days	Mon 10/4/00	Mon 11/5/00
Weekly 1998 SES Section for use	5 days	Mon 10/25/00	Fri 10/29/00
Scope Comments, System & Response	11 days	Mon 11/5/00	Mon 11/15/00
Scoping Period - extension	23 days	Wed 12/15/00	Mon 1/15/01
Public Scoping Meeting - Jansen	1 day	Mon 1/15/01	Mon 1/15/01
Public Scoping Meeting - Antelope	1 day	Tue 1/16/01	Tue 1/16/01
Public Scoping Meeting - Rodak	1 day	Wed 1/17/01	Wed 1/17/01
Public Scoping Meeting - Seale	1 day	Fri 1/19/01	Fri 1/19/01
Public Scoping Meeting - Stuba Report	45 days	Mon 1/15/01	Fri 1/19/01
Agency Review of Scoping Summary Report	24 days	Mon 1/15/01	Thu 2/17/01
Prepare Final Scoping Summary Report	11 days	Fri 2/16/01	Fri 2/23/01
CRS Supplemental EIS	281 days	Mon 12/12/00	Mon 1/15/01
Make final writing assignments	1 day	Mon 1/15/01	Mon 1/15/01
POSES Due	1 day	Mon 2/12/01	Mon 2/12/01
Agency review period	15 days	Tue 2/13/01	Mon 2/19/01
Interagency agency comments	15 days	Mon 2/19/01	Tue 3/5/01
Final half review	15 days	Mon 2/19/01	Tue 3/5/01
DEIS to GSA Review	24 days	Tue 3/5/01	Tue 3/19/01
DEIS Complete	1 day	Fri 3/16/01	Fri 3/16/01
DEIS 45 Day Public Comment Period	33 days	Mon 3/19/01	Mon 4/18/01
Final Supplemental EIS	150 days	Thu 4/18/01	Thu 12/13/00
Conduct, review, sign comments	30 days	Thu 12/13/00	Fri 1/22/01
Prepare responses to comments	23 days	Tue 1/22/01	Fri 2/19/01
Finalize responses and prepare FEIS	1 day	Wed 2/19/01	Wed 2/19/01
Agency review period	25 days	Wed 2/19/01	Thu 4/11/01
Review FEIS	12 days	Thu 4/11/01	Thu 4/27/01
Final half review	10 days	Mon 4/23/01	Fri 5/14/01
Final review, prepare FEIS	12 days	Mon 5/14/01	Thu 5/28/01
FEIS to GSA Review	22 days	Thu 5/28/01	Thu 6/28/01
Review Period and ROD	81 days	Fri 6/28/01	Fri 12/14/00
30-day public review period	23 days	Tue 7/24/01	Fri 8/20/01
ROD issued	1 day	Fri 10/19/01	Fri 10/19/01

PROJECT SCHEDULE - NMFS GROUND FISH FISHERIES SEIS



Task Milestone Summary Meeting

Schedule reflects working days. *Friday