



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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C4 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

February 2023

Action Memo

- Council Staff: Sarah Rheinsmith
- Other Presenters: Coral report - Dr. Thomas Hourigan (NMFS HCD)
EFH report - Dr. Jodi Pirtle, Molly Zaleski, Gretchen Harrington (NMFS AKR HCD)
- Action Required:
1. Receive NOAA Coral Research update- informational only
 2. Review the 2023 EFH 5-year review summary report
 3. Consider whether FMP amendments are required to revise EFH or reevaluate EFH management measurements
 4. Consider whether to identify HAPC priorities and initiate a call for proposals

BACKGROUND

The Council will receive two presentations under the C4 EFH agenda item: an informational research update on the deep-sea coral (DSC) research from the Habitat Conservation Division, and the EFH 5-year review summary report. A brief description of the topics is below:

- A. Deep Sea Coral (DSC) research update:** Tom Hourigan, NOAA Deep Sea Coral Research & Technology Program's Chief Scientist, will provide a brief overview of collaborative research led by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. He will also highlight methods used in other council regions to regulate fishing activities that may impact deep-sea coral habitat. There is no Council action required for the DSC update.
- B. EFH 5-year review summary report:** The Council will receive a presentation summarizing the 2023 EFH 5-year review process. The SSC has reviewed the methodology and results included in the 2023 EFH 5-year review, their recommendations can be seen in the SSC minutes excerpt included on the eAgenda. Through the iterative review process, analysts incorporated SSC recommendations and suggested modifications into the full 2023 EFH 5-year review summary report.

The Councils and NMFS are required to review the essential fish habitat (EFH) components of Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and revise or amend these components based on available information at least every five years in what is referred to as an EFH 5-year Review. The 2023 EFH 5-year review highlights 7 components in which new information and emerging research were developed: 1) EFH descriptions and identification (maps), 2) impacts of fishing activities on EFH, 3) impacts of non-fishing activities on EFH, 4) EFH conservation and enhancement recommendations, 5) prey species list and habitat locations, 6) HAPC identification, and 7) research and informational needs.

Based on the information provided in the summary report, the Council will determine whether revisions to EFH or reevaluations of EFH management measurements are necessary for any or all of the Council's FMPs. If the Council determines that revisions are necessary, FMP amendments will be prepared and presented to the Council at a future Council meeting. If the Council concludes that amendments are not necessary for one or more FMPs, existing definitions of EFH would remain as the legal descriptions. The Council could also, at this or a later point, consider whether to initiate a new HAPC proposal cycle by identifying priorities and initiating a call for proposals for specific sites for HAPC nomination.