

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC, and AP Members  
FROM: Chris Oliver   
Executive Director  
DATE: March 23, 2011  
SUBJECT: Essential Fish Habitat – EFH omnibus amendments

ESTIMATED TIME  
2 HOURS  
(All C-5 items)

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

Final action on EFH Omnibus Amendments. *John*

**BACKGROUND:**

The EFH omnibus amendments implement technical changes to EFH descriptions in the Council's FMPs, which were identified during the 2010 EFH 5-year review. In early March 2011, the Council received a public review draft of an Environmental Assessment to evaluate the proposed actions (the first two chapters of the EA are attached as Item C-5(a)(1)). There are seven actions included in this omnibus EFH amendment package. The proposed actions are FMP amendments only; there are no regulations that will be changed as a result of these amendments. The actions are as follows:

- Action 1 Update BSAI Groundfish FMP species EFH descriptions
- Action 2 Update GOA Groundfish FMP species EFH descriptions
- Action 3 Update BSAI King and Tanner Crab FMP species EFH descriptions
- Action 4 Update Scallop FMP species EFH description
- Action 5 Update non-fishing effects EFH recommendations in all 6 Council FMPs
- Action 6 Change default timing for HAPC process from 3 to 5 years in all 6 Council FMPs
- Action 7 Update research approach in all Council FMPs except Arctic

At initial review, the Council removed the action specifically updating EFH description information for salmon species in the Salmon FMP, as a new methodology to better delineate EFH is currently being reviewed by the AFSC. The resulting Salmon FMP revisions will come before the Council as part of a subsequent amendment.

The Scallop Plan Team met in early March, and provided feedback on the EFH revisions proposed for weathervane scallop. In consultation with the Plan Team, slight revisions were made to the updated map of scallop EFH that is included in this analysis. The revised map is attached as Item C-5(a)(2).

Additionally, at the February meeting, the Council made a policy statement clarifying how HAPC priorities are considered during future HAPC proposal cycles. The Council has indicated that a HAPC priority exists exclusively for the duration of a Council HAPC proposal cycles. This means that HAPC site proposals for a previously-designated HAPC priority may not be submitted on a continuing basis, and

need not be accepted unless (a) the Council re-designates that particular HAPC priority, or (b) NMFS brings forward compelling information to suggest that the Council should re-designate the HAPC priority. This policy statement has been reflected in Action 6.

NMFS has provided recommendations for the Council to assist in this action, as authorized under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These recommendations are attached as Item C-5(a)(3).