



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number:ID 14-017

Agenda Date4/7/2014

Agenda Number:D3

Eric Olson, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:
PSEIS SIR - Review

ESTIMATED TIME:
4 hours for all D items

ACTION REQUIRED:
Review PSEIS SIR

BACKGROUND

The Council is scheduled to review a draft Supplemental Information Report (SIR) that synthesizes relevant information in order to allow the Council and NMFS to determine whether there is a need to supplement the 2004 *Alaska Groundfish Fisheries Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (2004 PSEIS)*.

The 2004 PSEIS is a comprehensive review of the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries, which evaluated cumulative changes in the management of the groundfish fisheries, and a broad array of policy-level programmatic alternatives. On the basis of the PSEIS, the Council adopted its current groundfish management policy. In June 2012, the Council reviewed a discussion paper identifying factors that may influence the timing for supplementing or updating the 2004 PSEIS. To determine if a revision or supplement to the PSEIS is necessary at this time, the Council and NMFS decided to prepare a supplemental information report, a tool to evaluate the need to prepare a new environmental impact statement to supplement a previous EIS. NEPA requires agencies to prepare a supplemental EIS to either draft or final EISs if the agency (1) makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or (2) there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts.

The objective of the draft Supplemental Information Report is to synthesize relevant information to allow the Council and NMFS to determine whether the NEPA triggers for supplementing the 2004 PSEIS have been met. This SIR is being released as a draft at this time, in order to allow for public and Council review, and to ensure that all the relevant facts and information are compiled in the final SIR. In the draft, expert reviewers have considered new information from the perspective of each of the resource components affected by the groundfish fisheries. The decision as to whether to supplement the PSEIS must be based on consideration of the groundfish management program as a whole, however, and a 'preliminary conclusions' section begins to consolidate this information to the level of the overall groundfish program. It is the Council and NMFS' role, as decisionmakers, to conclude whether a supplement is required. Releasing the SIR as a draft allows the Council to request additional information, if necessary, and/or to provide a preliminary assessment of the information with respect to the NEPA conditions. If, based on the information in this SIR, the Council and NMFS find that the NEPA conditions for supplementing an EIS have not been met, then the Council is not required to take further action. On the other hand, if the Council and NMFS find that the PSEIS needs to be

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revisited based on this SIR, then a further NEPA analysis would be required.

Note, the draft SIR focuses exclusively on whether the triggers have been met that would require the Council and NMFS to supplement the PSEIS. The Council and NMFS may choose to supplement the PSEIS at any time for a variety of reasons. For example, if the Council wants to change the objectives, policy statements, or overall management approach for the groundfish fisheries, a programmatic EIS may be required. In 2012, the Council solicited comments from stakeholders on this issue, focused around the following questions:

- Are the Council's current groundfish management approach, policy goal statements, and objectives still relevant?
- How is the Council doing relative to achieving its groundfish management objectives?
- Are there new objectives that ought to become part of the groundfish management policy?

In 2012, none of the stakeholder input identified a compelling need to change the objectives, policy statements, or overall management approach for the groundfish fisheries, although several comments were made about how the Council should proceed with revising the PSEIS if it choose to do so.

If the Council and NMFS determine that a supplement to the 2004 PSEIS is neither required nor desirable, the Council may nonetheless wish to revisit its groundfish workplan. The Council originally developed the workplan in 2004 to guide the full implementation of the groundfish management policy into groundfish fisheries management, and it is reviewed during staff tasking at each meeting. The workplan prioritizes specific tasks for implementing groundfish fishery management measures that relate to the overall policy statements included in the management approach. The workplan was updated once, in 2007, but has not been updated since, and many of the identified tasks have now been achieved.