
ANNUAL ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT (EFH) REPORT, 2022

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COUNCIL'S ROLE IN EFH CONSULTATIONS

- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) provides a role for Councils in commenting on federal or state agency actions that would affect fish habitat.
- Section 305(b)(3)(A): Councils may comment on and make recommendations to the Secretary and any federal or state agency concerning any activity or proposed activity authorized, funded, or undertaken by the agency that, in the view of the Council, may affect the habitat, including EFH, of a fishery resource under its authority.
- Section 305(b)(3)(B): Councils must provide such comments and recommendations concerning any activity that, in the view of the Council, is likely to substantially affect the habitat, including EFH, of an anadromous fishery resource under Council authority.
- EFH regulations at 50 CFR 600.930(a) state that each Council should establish procedures for reviewing federal or state actions that may adversely affect the habitat, including EFH, of a species under its authority.



COUNCIL'S EFH CONSULTATION POLICY

The Council identified the following criteria to guide NMFS in determining whether an activity is likely to be of particular interest to the Council:

- The extent to which the activity would adversely affect EFH;
- The extent to which the activity would adversely affect Habitat Areas of Particular Concern or other areas established by the Council to protect sensitive habitat features;
- The extent to which the activity would be inconsistent with measures taken by the Council to minimize potential adverse effects of fishing on EFH; and
- The extent to which the activity would conflict with Council-managed fishing operations.



NMFS'S EFH CONSULTATIONS SINCE APRIL 2021

- IPOP Mining Safety Sound/Bonanza Channel, near Nome
- Oil and Gas Lease Sales
- Aquaculture
- Dredging and Harbor Improvements
- Coastal Development
- Hydropower
- Highway Projects
- Fiber optic cable
- Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Facilities Improvement



NMFS'S ONGOING EFH CONSULTATIONS

HCD is engaging with other Federal and State of Alaska agencies on the following proposed projects—

- Mines
 - Nome Offshore Gold Mining
 - Greens Creek Mine
 - Eskay Creek Mine, British Columbia, as technical advisor role
- Coastal Development
 - DNR-DMLW Over-the-Counter Dock Permit
 - Kuskokwim River Dock and Bulkhead
 - Nome Inner Harbor, Maintenance Dredging
- Alaska and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permits
- Aquaculture Permit Applications
- St Mary's Airport, Barge Landing
- USGS Sediment Coring, Kachemak Bay



INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

- We anticipate an increase in Federal projects funded under the *IJA* in 2022 and over the next 5 years. We are coordinating with other agencies to understand future projects and to frontload and plan EFH consultations.
- NOAA Restoration Center will be releasing Federal Funding Opportunities as well as increasing funding to Pacific Coast Salmon Restoration Fund (PCSRF) which funds Alaska Sustainable Science Fund.
- NOAA posts all funding opportunities at:
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/funding-opportunities>.
- The anticipated funding for these opportunities are:
 - Habitat Resilience - \$98 million/year for 5 years (\$490 million);
 - Tribal Fish Passage - \$12 million/year for 5 years (\$60 million);
 - Fish Passage - \$68 million/year for 5 years (\$340 million); and
 - PCSRF - an additional \$34.4 million/year for 5 years (\$172 million)



EFH 5-YEAR REVIEW UPDATE

- Launched in April 2019 with a presentation of the preliminary plan to the Ecosystem Committee.
- Started with the EFH descriptions and identification because of the work required to modernize the species distribution models used to create the EFH maps.
- This work was extensively reviewed through the Plan Teams and SSC public processes.
- Stock authors reviewed from January 2021 to November 2021 and the results of this review are in the *Report of Stock Assessment Author Review of EFH Components 1 and 7 for the 2022 EFH 5-year Review*.
- NMFS started the Fishing Effects (FE) work once the new EFH maps were finished. The SSC reviewed the model and plan for the FE assessment in February 2022.
- **Currently, stock authors and experts are reviewing the FE model results, conducting the FE assessment, and providing input on data limitations per the SSC request. *The results of this review will be presented to the SSC in October 2022.***
- Concurrently, we are revising the report on non-fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH and EFH conservation recommendations, and identifying research and information needs and developing a new 5-year EFH research plan.
- We will present a summary report with a comprehensive review of each of the prioritized EFH components to the Council (date TBD). If the Council chooses to update its FMPs based on the report, FMP amendments will be prepared along with the appropriate analytical documents through the normal Council process.



OTHER ITEMS IN THE EFH REPORT

- Tools for EFH Consultations
 - Alaska EFH Web Application, ShoreZone, Nearshore Fish Atlas, Non-Fishing Report
- NOAA Restoration Center and partner restoration work in Alaska
 - Buskin River, Kodiak, project restored access to 6.65 upstream miles and 95 upstream lake acres and restored connectivity to 0.23 miles of pristine stream habitat.
 - Additional information on the funding under the IIJA
- EFH Research funding for FY2022
 - Predictive distribution models to support flexible management of Bering Sea crab fisheries: a combined modeling, field, and laboratory approach.
 - Defining essential habitats for juvenile crab species: the importance of bottom temperature and diatom flux in defining juvenile crab abundance and condition across a warming Bering Sea.
 - Condition indicators for Pacific cod and walleye pollock from the eastern Bering Sea.
 - Accounting for trophic relationships in Essential Fish Habitat designation.
- HCD Accomplishment Report for FY 2021





Accomplishments Report

Alaska Region's Habitat Conservation Division

Fiscal year 2021



Gulf of Alaska Seamount Expedition. Large primnoid coral loaded with brittle stars on Dickins Seamount. Photo Credit: Gulf of Alaska 2004. NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration

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Our Mission

Habitat conservation, protection, and restoration are the foundation for sustaining the nation's fisheries. The Alaska Region (AKR) Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) carries out the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) statutory responsibilities for habitat conservation in Alaska under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Power Act (FPA), and other laws.

To prioritize our resources and activities, make decisions in an ecosystem context, and strengthen the science behind our decision-making, HCD works closely with the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), other National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) line offices, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC/Council), other federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, local governments, and a variety of industry and conservation groups.



Bering Sea snow crab support a valuable commercial fishery. Photo Credit: NOAA Fisheries

The Alaska Region's mission is science-based stewardship of living marine resources and their habitat in the waters of the North Pacific and Arctic Oceans off Alaska. Responsibilities include supporting sustainable fisheries, recovering and conserving protected species, and promoting healthy ecosystems and resilient coastal communities.