

Environmental Assessment for:

Amendment 98 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Area

Amendment 90 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska

Amendment 40 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs

Amendment 15 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Scallop Fishery off Alaska

Amendment 11 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Salmon Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone off the Coast of Alaska

Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan for Fish Resources of the Arctic Management Area

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Omnibus Amendments

Public Review Draft

February 2011

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Note, the appendices have not been mailed out with this initial review draft analysis. They are available online at www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/NPFMC, and there will be printed copies of the appendices available for reference at the March/April 2011 Council meeting.

1 Introduction and Purpose

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) includes provisions concerning the identification and conservation of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). The Magnuson-Stevens Act defines EFH as “those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity.” The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils) must describe and identify EFH in fishery management plans (FMP), minimize to the extent practicable the adverse effects of fishing on EFH, and identify other actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of EFH. Federal agencies that authorize, fund, or undertake actions that may adversely affect EFH must consult with NMFS, and NMFS must provide conservation recommendations to federal and state agencies regarding actions that would adversely affect EFH. Councils also have the authority to comment on federal or state agency actions that would adversely affect the habitat, including EFH, of managed species.

Each FMP contains the following EFH components:

1. EFH Descriptions and Identification;
2. Fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH;
3. Non-Magnuson-Stevens Act fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH;
4. Non-Fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH;
5. Cumulative impacts analysis;
6. EFH Conservation and Enhancement Recommendations;
7. Prey species list and any locations;
8. Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) identification;
9. Research and Information needs; and
10. Requirement to review EFH every 5 years.

1.1 2010 EFH 5-year review

In 2009-2010, the most recent 5-year EFH review was conducted for the Council, and documented in the Final EFH 5-year Review Summary Report (April 2010). The report reviewed EFH descriptions in five of the Council’s six FMPs (Table 1): the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Groundfish FMP, Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish FMP, BSAI Crab FMP, Scallop FMP, and Salmon FMP. The Council also has a sixth FMP, a new FMP for Fish Resources of the Arctic, that was approved by the Secretary of Commerce in August 2009 (Table 1). As a thorough assessment of EFH was included in the Arctic FMP, it was not addressed in the 5-year review report.

The review evaluated new information on EFH, assessed information gaps and research needs, and identified whether any revisions to EFH are needed or suggested. The EFH 5-year Review Summary Report is incorporated by reference in this analysis.

Table 1 List of Council Fishery Management Plans, and status of EFH review

Fishery Management Plan	EFH Last Updated	Review Status
Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI Groundfish)	2005	NPFMC review in 2009-10 (including Plan Team)
Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA Groundfish)	2005	NPFMC review in 2009-10 (including Plan Team)
Bering Sea/ Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (BSAI Crab)	2005	NPFMC review in 2010 (including Plan Team)
Scallop Fishery off Alaska (Scallop)	2005	NPFMC review in 2010 (including Plan Team)
Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ off the Coast of Alaska (Salmon)	2005	NPFMC review in 2010 No salmon plan team, so review was provided by NMFS salmon experts.
Fish Resources of the Arctic (Arctic)	FMP implemented in August 2009	NPFMC review completed in 2009 with adoption of FMP

Based on the review and the summary report, the Council identified various elements of the EFH descriptions that merit revision. Accordingly, the Council initiated an analysis to address recommendations arising from the 5-year review. The Council's motion from April 2010 is summarized in Table 2, which also pairs each recommendation with the corresponding action included in this analysis.

At initial review in February 2011, the Council chose to postpone amendments to EFH descriptions in the salmon FMP. NMFS is currently developing a new methodology which will allow the Council to refine area identified as EFH for marine life history stages of the Pacific salmon species. Once the methodology has been peer reviewed, changes to EFH descriptions in the salmon FMP will be initiated as a trailing amendment. Consequently, the action relating to changes to the salmon FMP has been removed from this omnibus amendment package.

Table 2 Summary of Council's recommended action resulting from the EFH 5-year review, April 2010

EFH component	Council FMP	Recommended change	Corresponding action in this analysis
EFH descriptions of individual species	BSAI Groundfish	Initiate amendments for all 24 species or complexes whose habitat is described in the FMP, to revise some aspect of the EFH description, as described in the summary report	Action 1
	GOA Groundfish	Initiate amendments for all 24 species or complexes whose habitat is described in the FMP, to revise some aspect of the EFH description, as described in the summary report	Action 2
	BSAI Crab	Initiate amendments for all 5 species or complexes in the FMP, to revise general EFH and fishery information for each species, as described in the summary report (amendments to revise the evaluation of fishing effects conclusions are not initiated at this time, rather see discussion under evaluation of fishing effects)	Action 3
	Scallop	Initiate amendment for the one species whose habitat is described in the FMP, to revise aspects of the EFH description, as described in the summary report	Action 4
	Salmon	Initiate amendments for all 5 species in the FMP, to revise some aspect of the EFH description, as described in the summary report, except that the recommendation to revise the conclusions of the effects of fishing on Chinook would not be forwarded for analysis	<i>(delayed until salmon EFH methodology is ready)</i>
Fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH	All Council FMPs	<p>A general re-evaluation of the effects of fishing activities on EFH, including re-running the model, should not be initiated at this time. Recent research results are consistent with the habitat sensitivity and recovery parameters and distributions of habitat types used in the prior analysis of fishing effects for the EFH EIS. Fishing intensity has decreased overall, gear regulations have been designated to reduce habitat damage, and area closures have limited the expansion of effort into areas of concern.</p> <p>For crab species, request a discussion paper to look at how the effects of fishing are considered for crab stocks. The paper should include the Plan Team's comments about considering the pelagic environment and transport mechanisms and their importance for spawning and breeding populations, and should also evaluate existing closures for crab habitat to see if habitat usage by crab species has changed since the mid-1990s when these closures were put into effect. Based on this discussion paper, the Council can then decide whether further analysis of this issue should be incorporated into the overall EFH analysis and amendments.</p>	<p>--</p> <p><i>(separate discussion paper)</i></p>
Non-fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH	All Council FMPs	Initiate amendments to update EFH conservation recommendations for 14 of 27 non-fishing activities.	Action 5
HAPC	All FMPs	Initiate amendment to revise the timeline associated with the HAPC process to coincide with the EFH 5-year review. Note, the Council also set skate nurseries as a habitat priority, and initiated a call for proposals for candidate HAPC sites. Any amendments resulting from the call for proposals will be, however, implemented through a separate process.	Action 6
Research and information needs	All FMPs	Initiate amendments to revise research priority objectives in the FMP. The Council's research priority objectives from 2005 have largely been met, however many of the research questions are still valid and remain to be investigated. The Council preliminarily identified new objectives to guide EFH research over the next 5 years.	Action 7

1.2 Purpose and Need Statement

The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether and how to amend the Council's FMPs pursuant to Section 303(a)(7) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which requires NMFS and the Council to (1) describe and identify EFH for the fishery, (2) minimize to the extent practicable the adverse effects of fishing on EFH, and (3) identify other actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of EFH. Depending on the preferred alternatives identified in this analysis, one or more of the Council's FMPs could be amended. The analysis contained in this document is based upon the best scientific information available and the guidelines articulated in the Final Rule to implement the EFH provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (see 50 CFR Part 600, Subpart J).

1.3 Problem Statement

At initial review, the Council adopted the following problem statement for this action:

The EFH Final Rule and each of the Council's FMPs state that a review of EFH components should be completed every 5 years and the EFH provisions should be revised or amended, as warranted, based on the best available information. The 5-year review of EFH was completed in April 2010, and synthesized in a Summary Report presented to the Council. Based on the review, the Council has determined that new habitat and life history information is available to revise many of the EFH descriptions and recommendations in the Council FMPs. Additionally, the EFH review process has proven to be an appropriate vehicle for identifying HAPC priorities, and the Council intends to consider whether periodic calls for HAPC proposals should be synchronized with future 5-year reviews.

2 Description of Actions and Alternatives

This amendment package includes a series of actions for the various Council FMPs. The EFH 5-year review addressed all of the Council's FMPs except the Arctic FMP, which was only recently adopted. Actions 1-4, below, would amend the description of EFH in 4 of the 5 FMPs that were addressed in the 5 year review (see Section 2.8 for discussion of intended changes to the Salmon FMP). Action 5 updates the effects of nonfishing activities in Alaska on EFH, and is applicable to all of the Council FMPs. Action 6 synchronizes the HAPC identification timeline with the EFH review, and is also applicable to all of the Council FMPs. Therefore, both Actions 5 and 6 will also require amendment of the Arctic FMP as well. Under Action 7, the Council will adjust its EFH research objectives in the five Council FMPs that were addressed in the 5 year EFH review report.

More detail on the specific revisions proposed under Alternative 2 in Actions 1-7 is included in the sections that follow relating to the specific actions.

2.1 Action 1 – BSAI Groundfish

Alternative 1 – No Action; status quo

Alternative 2 – Amend the EFH description for all twenty-four groundfish species or complexes

2.2 Action 2 – GOA Groundfish

Alternative 1 – No Action; status quo

Alternative 2 – Amend the EFH description for all twenty-four groundfish species or complexes

2.3 Action 3 – BSAI King and Tanner Crab

Alternative 1 – No Action; status quo

Alternative 2 – Amend the EFH description for all five crab species or complexes

2.4 Action 4 – Alaska Scallops

Alternative 1 – No Action; status quo

Alternative 2 – Amend the EFH description for weathervane scallop

2.5 Action 5 – Non-fishing Activities

Alternative 1 – No Action; status quo

Alternative 2 – Amend EFH conservation recommendations for non-fishing activities in all Council FMPs

2.6 Action 6 – HAPC Timeline

Alternative 1 – No Action; status quo

Alternative 2 – Revise timeline for considering HAPCs from three to five years in all six Council FMPs

2.7 Action 7 – EFH Research Priorities

Alternative 1 – No Action; status quo

Alternative 2 – Revise research objectives for EFH in five Council FMPs

2.8 Relationship to other Council actions resulting from the 2010 EFH 5-year review

Salmon EFH descriptions

For Salmon FMP species, EFH is described in three parts: marine, nearshore, and freshwater. Marine and nearshore salmon EFH is generally described to include all marine waters from the mean higher tide line to the limits of the EEZ. However, a new methodology to refine the geographic scope of EFH for Pacific salmon in marine waters off Alaska has been developed by the AFSC. AFSC salmon experts have finalized their methodology, which will undergo peer review in 2011 and be published as a NOAA Technical Memorandum. Once the NOAA Tech Memo is complete, the methodology can be used as a mechanism to update marine salmon EFH. The preliminary findings indicate that habitat preferences exist by salmon species and life stage, and that the methodology will be very useful to refine EFH for the different life stages of each Pacific salmon using oceanic variables (i.e. depth, temperature, salinity).

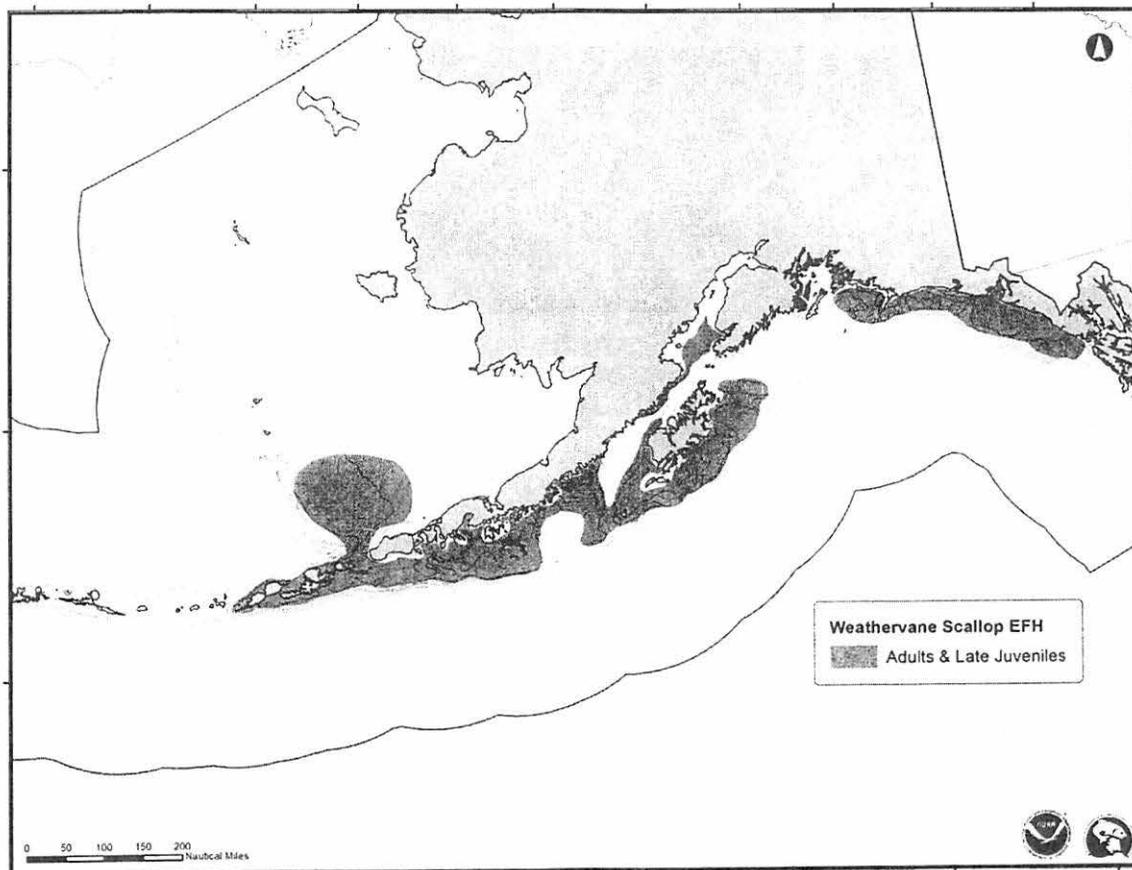
The omnibus amendment originally included an action to make technical or housekeeping changes to the EFH description language, pending the completion of the comprehensive refinement of EFH descriptions that would result from the application of the new methodology. At initial review in February 2011, the Council chose to postpone any amendments to EFH descriptions in the salmon FMP until the new methodology is ready to be utilized. Once the methodology has been peer reviewed, changes to EFH descriptions in the salmon FMP will be initiated as a trailing amendment. Consequently, the action relating to changes to the salmon FMP has been removed from this omnibus amendment package.

Other discussion papers resulting from the 5-year EFH review

The Council requested two additional discussion papers during the April 2010 review of the final EFH 5-year review summary report. The summary report for the 5-year review contained a recommendation by the groundfish Plan Teams that the Council consider establishing measures conserve EFH from fishing threats to sablefish recruitment. In April 2010, the Council considered the Teams' recommendation, and asked for further information with which to evaluate how it should be addressed. The Council was specifically interested in understanding whether the problems with sablefish recruitment are habitat-driven, or is poor recruitment attributable to other factors. At initial review of the omnibus amendment package, in February 2011, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on factors affecting sablefish recruitment in Alaska, which was prepared by the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. The conclusions in the discussion paper indicate that adopting specific conservation measures for juvenile sablefish is premature given ongoing research about the relationship between habitat and recruitment. Consequently, the Council took no further action with regard to EFH conservation recommendations for sablefish.

The 5-year review also included recommendations by the BSAI Crab Plan Team that EFH for crab species should include the pelagic environment and transport mechanisms and their importance for spawning and breeding populations. A particular area of southwestern Bristol Bay, which is also an area of intensive trawl fishing, was newly identified as particularly important spawning grounds for Bristol Bay red king crab. The Council requested a discussion paper to look at how the effects of fishing are considered for crab stocks, both to address the Plan Team's comments, and also to evaluate existing closures for crab habitat to see if habitat usage by crab species has changed since the mid-1990s when these closures were put into effect. Given the timing of the discussion paper, which will be available for review in April 2011, the Council determined that any action that may result from this discussion paper will be moved forward as a trailing amendment to the omnibus package.

**Revised EFH map for weathervane scallop, as recommended by the Scallop Plan Team,
March 2011.**



Note, the map showing how the EFH area was revised at the March 2011 Scallop Plan Team may be found in the Plan Team minutes, under agenda item D-1.



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

*National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668*

AGENDA C-5(a)(3)
APRIL 2011

March 21, 2011

RECEIVED
MAR 21 2011

Mr. Eric Olson, Chairman
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West Fourth Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2252

Dear Mr. Olson:

Enclosed please find the National Marine Fisheries Service's written recommendations for the EFH provisions of the Council's fishery management plans, pursuant to section 305(b)(1)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and 50 CFR 600.815(b). We will review these recommendations with the Council during the April 2011 meeting, and we look forward to working with the Council on this comprehensive amendment.

Sincerely,

James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.
Administrator, Alaska Region

Enclosure



National Marine Fisheries Service
Recommendations for the EFH Provisions of
North Pacific Fishery Management Council Fishery Management Plans
March 2011

Section 305(b)(1)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Act requires that "The Secretary, in consultation with participants in the fishery, shall provide each Council with recommendations and information regarding each fishery under that Council's authority to assist it in the identification of essential fish habitat, the adverse impacts on that habitat, and the actions that should be considered to ensure the conservation and enhancement of that habitat." The Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) regulations at 50 CFR 600.815(b) elaborate on this requirement as follows:

Development of EFH recommendations for Councils. After reviewing the best available scientific information, as well as other appropriate information, and in consultation with the Councils, participants in the fishery, interstate commissions, Federal agencies, state agencies, and other interested parties, NMFS will develop written recommendations to assist each Council in the identification of EFH, adverse impacts to EFH, and actions that should be considered to ensure the conservation and enhancement of EFH for each FMP. NMFS will provide such recommendations for the initial incorporation of EFH information into an FMP and for any subsequent modification of the EFH components of an FMP. The NMFS EFH recommendations may be provided either before the Council's development of a draft EFH document or later as a review of a draft EFH document developed by a Council, as appropriate.

This document constitutes NMFS' written recommendations pursuant to 50 CFR 600.815(b).

EFH 5 Year Review

In 2010, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) conducted a thorough review of each of the ten EFH components within each Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The 2010 EFH Five-Year Review (Review) established an approach to reassess EFH and update FMPs with the most recent information and best available science. The Review outlines potential modifications to provisions within each of the six Council FMPs. NMFS used a variety of means to provide recommendations and information to assist the Council, such as biological information and habitat requirements of managed species; spatial analyses to facilitate the identification and refinement of EFH; preparation of a retrospective, focused evaluation as to the effects of fishing on EFH; collaboration with Plan Teams; and technical and policy guidance to advise the Council on how best to fulfill the EFH requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

The Review generally found that stock information has changed little since the comprehensive 2005 EFH final environmental impact statement (2005 EFH FEIS). The Review did not identify any new information to warrant revising the overall evaluation of the effects of fishing on EFH, however it highlighted a need to reassess the effects of fishing on Bristol Bay Red King Crab (BBRKC) habitat and juvenile sablefish EFH. In October 2010, the Council decided to separate the BBRKC and juvenile sablefish issues from the EFH omnibus package. In December 2010, the Council chose not to take further action on sablefish issues after hearing from Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) sablefish stock experts that too little is known to justify management action and the Council should consider research priority areas. Likewise, although AFSC staff developed a new methodology using oceanic variables to refine EFH descriptions for all marine life stages of Pacific salmon, the methodology and recommended refinements have not yet undergone peer review and will be considered as a separate action or as part of the Salmon FMP review to occur later in

2011. For BBRKC, a separate discussion paper will be prepared and presented at the April 2011 Council meeting. Finally, the Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) process will be updated to coincide with the 5-Year EFH Review timing and include new benchmarks to rank HAPC proposals.

EFH Omnibus Amendment

The Habitat Conservation Division, Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and Council staffs have prepared an Environmental Assessment for the EFH Omnibus Amendment. Based on the Review results and incorporating pertinent Council, stakeholder, and public comment, the EFH Omnibus Amendment will revise the description and identification of EFH in the BSAI and GOA Groundfish FMPs, BSAI Crab FMP, and Scallop FMP; change the default timing for considering new HAPCs from 3 to 5 years in all 6 Council FMPs; update each Council FMP, except the new Arctic FMP, with the most recent research; and update the discussion of non-fishing activities affecting EFH in all 6 Council FMPs.

Recommendations Regarding the Description and Identification of EFH

NMFS recommends the Council endorse all of the proposed updates for describing and identifying EFH. Since 2005, AFSC research has led to a better understanding of EFH for a number of stocks. The Review found that in most cases revisions to EFH descriptions are solely to incorporate new information and, as such, are largely technical or housekeeping changes. No new methodology has been developed to change the EFH descriptions; changes are limited to modest refinements using the same methodology used in the 2005 EFH FEIS. NMFS is hopeful that future research and methodologies will continue to improve how EFH may be described in the future reviews.

Recommendations Regarding the Process for Identifying HAPCs

NMFS recommends the Council adopt the change to align the HAPC process to occur concurrently with future EFH 5-Year reviews and maintain the ability for the Council to initiate the HAPC process at any time, should the need exist to identify and conserve HAPCs between 5-year reviews. Currently, the HAPC process is to occur every three years or "on a schedule established by the Council". The process would benefit by having stock and habitat experts, stakeholders, and the public all focusing on EFH and HAPC together instead of on different schedules.

Recommendations Regarding the Research

NMFS recommends the Council update FMPs with the most recent information and best science available. The Review provided a thorough review of habitat associations and life history information, including recently published scientific sources. This information is the most recent and best scientific information available and compiled by life stage, where known. Each EFH species was examined and stock authors identified updates, information gaps, and research unknowns. The result is a comprehensive list of research needs by species and by life stage. NMFS recommends this list be used to formulate research objectives and priorities.

Recommendations Regarding Other Actions to Conserve and Enhance EFH

One of the requirements of Section 303(a)(7) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act is for FMPs to identify "other actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of" EFH. This requirement refers to actions other than those necessary to minimize to the extent practicable the adverse effects of fishing on EFH. The EFH regulations require that FMPs identify activities other than fishing that may adversely affect EFH and recommend options to avoid, minimize, or offset adverse effects.

NMFS recommends the Council endorse the newly prepared document *Impacts to EFH from Non-fishing Activities in Alaska*. The review document discusses activities that may affect EFH such as mining, forestry, agriculture, oil and gas development, dredging, and filling wetlands and provides recommendations for conducting such activities in a manner to promote the conservation and enhancement of EFH. The document organizes activities into four categories: Upland, Riverine, Estuarine, and Coastal/Marine. In 2005, Appendix G of the EFH FEIS fulfilled the requirement to describe non-fishing activities that may have adverse effects on EFH and identify actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of EFH. In 2010, NMFS Habitat Conservation Division staff reviewed the existing non-fishing activities evaluation (Appendix G) and based on more recent scientific literature and the best available information specific to Alaska, updated the analysis of each activity's potential to result in adverse impacts on EFH. Additionally, new conservation measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for adverse effects on EFH were recommended, as appropriate. The updated review provides an introductory description of each activity, identifies potential adverse impacts, revises existing general conservation measures, and offers new conservation recommendations. The potential for effects from larger, less readily managed processes associated with human activity also exists, such as climate change and ocean acidification. These larger, ecosystem level effects are discussed in the updated document where applicable. Subject-specific recommendations are advisory (non-binding) and serve as proactive conservation measures that would help minimize and avoid adverse effects of these non-fishing activities on EFH. Site-specific EFH Conservation Recommendations will be prepared per activity and as necessary during EFH Consultation [see: CFR 50 Part 600 Subpart K].

Recommendations Regarding Measures to Minimize the Effects of Fishing on EFH

The Review reconsidered the effects of fishing on EFH including the various factors that input to the fishing effects model used for the 2005 EFH FEIS in light of new information available in 2010. The footprint of fishing, and changes in the overall location of fishing since 2005 were evaluated in aggregate, and also specifically considered by each of the stock assessment authors to determine whether there would be any change in impact for their assessed species. The evaluation comparatively looked at fishing intensity on EFH in five year periods: 1993-1997; 1998-2002; 2003-2007. The evaluation concluded that recent research results are consistent with the habitat sensitivity and recovery parameters and distributions of habitat types used in the prior analysis of fishing effects for the EFH EIS. Fishing intensity has decreased overall, gear regulations have been designated in some cases to reduce habitat damage, and area closures have limited the expansion of effort into areas of concern. Consequently, the Council did not initiate a general re-evaluation of the effects of fishing activities on EFH, including re-running the model, based on the information synthesized in the EFH 5-year review summary report.

NMFS recommends the Council continue to pursue the following courses of action regarding the effects of fishing on EFH:

1. The Council should continue to analyze carefully the effects of its management actions on sea floor habitats. NMFS remains committed to assisting the Council with such analyses.
2. The Council should continue to support research funded by NMFS, the North Pacific Research Board, and other entities to improve scientific understanding of the effects of fishing on habitat, the linkages between habitats and managed species, and the recovery rates of sea floor habitats following disturbance by fishing gear.
3. The Council should take specific precautionary management actions as new information

becomes available to avoid additional disturbance to fragile sea floor habitats that may be especially slow to recover – most notably deep water coral communities.

4. **The Council should consider ways to conserve and protect BBRKC habitat from fishing disturbance.**
5. **The Council should initiate a means to identify research areas within existing fishing areas to assess cumulative and long term effects (holistic effects) that continued fishing may be having on EFH, as highlighted in AFSC's recent white paper concerning sablefish habitats.**

C5(a) – Essential Fish Habitat Council Motion
April 3, 2011

Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Council must identify essential fish habitat, the adverse impacts on that habitat, and the actions that should be considered to ensure the conservation and enhancement of that habitat for each fishery under Council authority. In 2010, the Council and NMFS conducted a thorough review of all EFH components within each of its Fishery Management Plans. From the 2010 EFH 5-year review, the Council takes the following actions below.

Problem statement:

The EFH Final Rule and each of the Council's FMPs state that a review of EFH components should be completed every 5 years and the EFH provisions should be revised or amended, as warranted, based on the best available information. The 5-year review of EFH was completed in April 2010, and synthesized in a Summary Report presented to the Council. Based on the review, the Council has determined that new habitat and life history information is available to revise many of the EFH descriptions and recommendations in the Council FMPs. Additionally, the EFH review process has proven to be an appropriate vehicle for identifying HAPC priorities, and the Council intends to consider whether periodic calls for HAPC proposals should be synchronized with future 5-year reviews.

Motion:

The Council adopts the following actions regarding EFH:

1. Amend the EFH description of the BSAI Groundfish FMP for all twenty-four groundfish species or complexes.
2. Amend the EFH description of the GOA Groundfish FMP for all twenty-four Groundfish species or complexes.
3. Amend the EFH description of the BSAI King and Tanner Crab FMP for the five crab species or complexes.
4. Amend the EFH description of the Alaska Scallop FMP for the weathervane scallop.
5. Amend the EFH conservation recommendations for non-fishing activities in all Council FMPs.
6. Revise the timeline for considering HAPCs from three to five years in all Council FMPs.
7. Revise the research objectives for EFH in the five Council FMPs subject to the 2010 EFH review (excludes the Arctic FMP).

In taking this action, the Council recognizes that certain EFH components under its Salmon FMP and that an examination of the effects of fishing on spawning and breeding of Bristol Bay Red King Crab in Southern Bristol Bay under its BSAI King and Tanner Crab FMP continue to be reviewed and any resulting changes to the EFH description for these species will be initiated as separate trailing amendments.