

access to historic Chinook salmon spawning and rearing habitat.

2. *Harvest*: The Plan reviews the history and effects of commercial and recreational harvest on Puget Sound Chinook and notes that harvest today is managed under the following major management forums: the Pacific Salmon Commission, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, and the Federal court proceedings of *U.S. v. Washington*. Current management objectives emphasize survival and recovery of wild salmon populations.

3. *Hatcheries*: The Plan reviews risks to the listed ESU from hatchery production, which include genetic effects that reduce fitness and survival, ecological effects such as competition and predation, facility effects on passage and water quality, mixed stock fishery effects, and masking the true status of naturally produced fish. The Plan describes recent efforts toward hatchery reform and refers to the Chinook Hatchery Resource Management Plan and NMFS' Chinook Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans for actions to help recover natural populations and reconfigure production-based hatchery programs to minimize impacts on natural populations.

4. *Additional Factors*: The Plan reviews the following additional factors that affect Puget Sound salmon: global climate change, fluctuating ocean cycles, and marine mammal interactions. These considerations further support recovery actions to protect and restore local habitat conditions as a buffer against larger-scale changes.

5. *Integration across all the Hs (Habitat, Harvest, Hatcheries)*: The Plan states that recovery will depend on integrating actions that address habitat, harvest, and hatcheries and working together to adjust approaches and actions over time as population conditions change. The Plan calls for advancing the work on all-H integration in the first years of plan implementation.

The Plan identifies substantive actions needed to achieve recovery by addressing the threats to the species. The Plan also incorporates an adaptive management framework by which Plan actions and other elements will evolve and adapt to information gained as a result of monitoring and evaluation. The Plan anticipates that future actions will be influenced by additional analysis of costs and effectiveness of recovery actions to maximize efficiency.

The long-term goal is to achieve viable salmonid populations, i.e. to achieve self-sustaining populations of Puget Sound Chinook salmon in terms

of abundance, productivity, spatial distribution, and diversity.

Because of the complexity and extent of the changes necessary to reach the recovery targets and the technical and policy uncertainties associated with the long term, policymakers chose to focus on developing a ten-year work plan within the context of the overall recovery need, while recognizing that recovery could take much longer. Since the existing 22 independent Puget Sound Chinook salmon populations are currently at high risk of extinction, the short-term goal is to improve conditions for all the populations and to get on a trajectory toward recovery early in implementation. Additional goals in this timeframe include implementing and evaluating the set of short-term strategies and priority actions identified; gaining a preliminary view of the status and trends of important recovery indicators; and making mid-course corrections as needed. In ten years, watershed and regional leaders will put forward the next set of strategies and actions toward achieving the long-term goal.

An implementation schedule is incorporated into the Plan. The first step involves further coordination among the Shared Strategy, local watershed groups, and various decision makers and responsible entities to develop an adaptive management and monitoring program that is integrated at the watershed and regional level.

Public Comments Solicited

NMFS solicits written comments on the proposed Recovery Plan, including the Shared Strategy Plan and the Supplement. The Supplement states NMFS' assessment of the Shared Strategy Plan's relationship to ESA requirements for recovery plans and specifies recovery (de-listing) criteria for the ESU. The Supplement also explains the agency's intent to use the Shared Strategy Plan to guide and prioritize Federal recovery actions in the ESU and to ultimately adopt the Shared Strategy Plan as a final ESA recovery plan for the ESU. All substantive comments received by the date specified above will be considered prior to NMFS' decision whether to endorse the Plan as a final recovery plan. Additionally, NMFS will provide a summary of the comments and responses and notice of the final Plan. NMFS seeks comments particularly in the following areas: (1) the analysis of limiting factors and threats; (2) the recovery strategies and measures; (3) the criteria for removing the ESU from the Federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; and (4) meeting the ESA

requirement for estimates of time and cost to implement recovery actions by soliciting implementation schedules.

Authority

The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: December 20, 2005.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Division of Endangered Species, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 111505A]

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Extension of Public Scoping Period for Intersector Groundfish Allocations

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Extension of public scoping period for an environmental impact statement (EIS); request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) announce their intent to extend the public scoping period for an EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 to analyze proposals to allocate groundfish among various sectors of the non-tribal Pacific Coast groundfish fishery.

DATES: Public scoping meetings will be announced in the **Federal Register** at a later date. Written comments will be accepted at the Pacific Council office through May 24, 2006. Written and oral comments will be accepted at the Pacific Council meeting in Foster City, CA from Sunday June 11 through Friday, June 16, 2006.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, on issues and alternatives, identified by 111505A by any of the following methods:

- *E-mail:* ##GFAAllocationEIS.nwr@noaa.gov. Include [111505A and enter "Scoping Comments" in the subject line of the message.

- *Fax:* 503-820-2299.

- *Mail:* Dr. Donald McIsaac, Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE Ambassador Pl., Suite 200, Portland, OR 97220.

• Written and oral comment at the June 11–16, 2006, Pacific Council meeting: Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1221 Chess Drive, Foster City, CA 94404.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. John DeVore, Pacific Fishery Management Council, phone: 503–820–2280, fax: 503–820–2299 and email: john.devore@noaa.gov; or Ms. Yvonne de Reynier NMFS, Northwest Region, phone: 206–526–6129, fax: 206–526–6426 and e-mail: yvonne.dereynier@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

This **Federal Register** document is available on the Government Printing Office's Web site at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index/html>.

Description of the Proposal

The proposed action with a description of the proposal was published in the **Federal Register** on November 21, 2005 (70 FR 70054).

Preliminary Identification of Environmental Issues

A principal objective of this scoping and public input process is to identify potentially significant impacts to the human environment that should be analyzed in depth in the intersector allocation EIS. Concomitant with identification of those impacts to be analyzed in depth is identification and elimination from detailed study of issues that are not significant or which have been covered in prior environmental reviews. This narrowing is intended to allow greater focus on those impacts that are potentially most significant. Impacts on the following components of the biological and physical environment will be evaluated: (1) Essential fish habitat and ecosystems; (2) protected species listed under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act and their habitat; and (3) the fishery management unit, including target and non-target fish stocks. Socioeconomic impacts are also considered in terms of the effect changes will have on the following groups: (1) Those who participate in harvesting the fishery resources and other living marine resources (for commercial, subsistence, or recreational purposes); (2) those who process and market fish and fish products; (3) those who are involved in allied support industries; (4) those who rely on living marine resources in the management area; (5) those who consume fish products; (6) those who benefit from non-consumptive use (e.g., wildlife viewing); (7) those who do not

use the resource, but derive benefit from it by virtue of its existence, the option to use it, or the bequest of the resource to future generations; (8) those involved in managing and monitoring fisheries; and (9) fishing communities. Analysis of the effects of the alternatives on these groups will be presented in a manner that allows the identification of any disproportionate impacts on low income and minority segments of the identified groups, impacts on small entities, and cumulative impacts. Additional comment is sought on other types of impacts that should be considered or specific impacts to which particular attention should be paid within these categories.

Scoping and Public Involvement

Scoping is an early and open process for identifying the scope of notable issues related to proposed alternatives (including status quo and other alternatives identified during the scoping process). A principal objective of the scoping and public input process is to identify a reasonable set of alternatives that, with adequate analysis, sharply define critical issues and provide a clear basis for distinguishing among those alternatives and selecting a preferred alternative. The public scoping process provides the public with the opportunity to comment on the range of alternatives. The scope of the alternatives to be analyzed should be broad enough for the Pacific Council and NMFS to make informed decisions on whether an alternative should be developed and, if so, how it should be designed, and to assess other changes to the FMP and regulations necessary for the implementation of the alternative.

Written comments will be accepted at the Pacific Council office through May 24, 2006 (see **ADDRESSES**). Written and oral comments will be accepted at the Pacific Council meeting in Foster City, CA from Sunday June 11 through Friday, June 16, 2006 (see **ADDRESSES**). Public scoping meetings will be announced in the **Federal Register** at a later date and posted on the Pacific Council Web site.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: December 20, 2005.

John H. Dunnigan,

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 121905C]

New England Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; committee meeting.

SUMMARY: The New England Fishery Management Council's (Council) Habitat/MPA Committee will meet to consider actions affecting New England fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 11, 2006, at 9 a.m.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held at the Best Western Mystic, 9 Whitehall Avenue, Mystic, CT 06355; telephone: (860) 536–4281.

Council address: New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul J. Howard, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council; telephone: (978) 465–0492.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The items of discussion in the committee's agenda are as follows:

1. The Committee will continue work on elements of the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Omnibus Amendment 2 including, but not limited to: review and refinement of EFH designations and consideration of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

2. The Committee will discuss issues relevant to the Ecosystems Pilot Project, including:

- A presentation on the interface of coastal pollution and marine fisheries productivity
- A review the Stakeholder Workshop results
- Future directions for the Pilot Project

3. There will be a closed session to consider Habitat Advisory Panel membership.

4. The Committee may consider other topics at their discretion.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under