

Assessment Part 2 for 2016 Ocean Salmon Fishery Regulations” is scheduled to be posted on the Pacific Council Web site at <http://www.pcouncil.org>. The report will include a description of the salmon management alternatives and a summary of their biological and economic impacts. Public hearings will be held to receive comments on the proposed ocean salmon fishery management alternatives adopted by the Pacific Council. Written comments received at the public hearings and a summary of oral comments at the hearings will be provided to the Pacific Council at its April meeting.

All public hearings begin at 7 p.m. at the following locations:

- March 28, 2016: Chateau Westport, Beach Room, 710 West Hancock, Westport, WA 98595, telephone 360-268-9101.
- March 28, 2016: Red Lion Hotel, South Umpqua Room, 1313 North Bayshore Drive, Coos Bay, OR 97420, telephone 541-267-4141.
- March 29, 2016: Motel 6, Convention Room, 400 South Main St, Fort Bragg, CA 95437, telephone 707-964-4761.

Comments on the alternatives the Pacific Council adopts at its March 2016 meeting, and described in Preseason Report II, may be submitted in writing or electronically as described under **ADDRESSES**, or verbally or in writing at any of the public hearings held on March 28-29, 2016, or at the Pacific Council’s meeting, April 9-14, 2016, at the Hilton in Vancouver, WA. Details of these meetings will be available on the Pacific Council’s Web site (<http://www.pcouncil.org>) and will be published in the **Federal Register**. Written and electronically submitted comments must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time, April 3, 2016, in order to be included in the briefing book for the April Council meeting where they will be considered in the adoption of the Pacific Council’s final recommendation for the 2016 salmon fishery management measures. All comments received accordingly will be reviewed and considered by the Pacific Council and NMFS.

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

Dated: January 27, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2016-01761 Filed 1-29-16; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XD882

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Snapper-Grouper Fishery Off the South Atlantic States; Amendment 36

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

ACTION: Notice announcing the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA).

SUMMARY: NMFS, Southeast Region, in collaboration with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), is preparing an EA for Amendment 36 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 36). Amendment 36 considers alternatives to implement special management zones (SMZs) in the exclusive economic zone of the South Atlantic. This notice is intended to inform the public of the change from the preparation of a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) to an EA for Amendment 36.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rick DeVictor, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, or email: rick.devictor@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: An NOI to prepare a DEIS for Amendment 36 was published in the **Federal Register** on April 8, 2015 (80 FR 18823). The NOI indicated that Amendment 36 would be supported by an environmental impact statement, which was the preliminary determination at the time the original purpose and need of the amendment was drafted. In addition to publication of the NOI, the Council held scoping meetings for Amendment 36 from April 20-23, 2015. When the Council first requested development of this amendment, they were considering SMZs of comparably larger sizes. A reassessment of the actions in Amendment 36 relative to the National Environmental Policy Act indicates an EA is appropriate. Therefore, a DEIS will not be prepared for Amendment 36 at this time.

Through Amendment 36, the Council is considering modifications to the SMZ process and framework procedures to include the consideration of SMZs that would protect locations where snapper-grouper species are likely to spawn and natural habitats that support spawning fish. Protecting locations where fish

spawn and protecting natural habitats that support spawning fish may act as an effective strategy when managing a sustainable fish population. In the EA, the Council is also considering the implementation of SMZs to protect spawning snapper-grouper species in the South Atlantic region, in addition to specifying the anchoring, transit, and sunset provisions. Sunset provisions designate the date that the SMZs would be removed from the regulations unless retained through action by the Council and NMFS.

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

Dated: January 27, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2016-01756 Filed 1-29-16; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE401

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS); request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) announce their intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 to analyze the short- and long-term impacts on the human (biological, physical, social, and economic) environment of Amendment 28 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This notice also requests written comment.

DATES: Public scoping will be conducted through this notice. Written comments must be received by 5 p.m. Pacific Standard Time on March 2, 2016 (see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**).

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

• **Email:**
GroundfishAmendment28.wcr@noaa.gov.

• **Fax:** 360-753-9463, Attention Dr. John Stadler.

• *Mail:* Submit written comments to Dr. John Stadler, Essential Fish Habitat Coordinator, NMFS West Coast Region, 510 Desmond Drive SE., Lacey, WA 98503.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. John Stadler, Essential Fish Habitat Coordinator, NMFS West Coast Region at 360-534-9328 or john.stadler@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background for Agency Actions and Proposed Action

There are more than 90 species managed under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (Groundfish FMP). These groundfish stocks support an array of commercial, recreational, and tribal fishing interests in state and Federal waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. In addition, groundfish are also harvested incidentally in non-groundfish fisheries, most notably, the trawl fisheries for pink shrimp and California halibut.

Amendment 28 to the FMP is intended to accomplish three goals: (1) Revise the essential fish habitat (EFH) components of the FMP; (2) make adjustments to the trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs); and (3) use the discretionary authorities in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to protect benthic habitats, including deep sea corals, from the adverse effects of fishing. These actions are described in detail below.

Essential Fish Habitat

The MSA mandates that each regional fishery management council designate EFH for the species that they manage. EFH is defined as “those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding or growth to maturity.” The regulations implementing the EFH provisions of the MSA (50 CFR 600.815) require or, in some cases, recommend that fishery management plans include the following components:

1. A description and identification of EFH, including habitat information for each managed species and life stage;
2. A description of the MSA fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH and management measures to minimize those effects to the extent practicable;
3. A description of the non-MSA fishing activities that may adversely

affect EFH, for example, those managed by state agencies;

4. A description of the non-fishing activities that may adversely affect;
5. and analysis, if feasible, of how the cumulative effects of fishing and non-fishing activities affect the function of EFH on an ecosystem or watershed scale;
6. A description of conservation and enhancement measures that encourage the conservation of EFH, including recommended options to avoid, minimize, or compensate for the adverse effects of fishing and non-fishing activities;
7. Identification of the major prey species of each species;
8. Identification of habitat areas of particular concern (HAPCs); and
9. Identification of research and information needs that the Council and NMFS view as necessary to improve upon the description and identification of EFH, the identification of threats to EFH from fishing and other activities, and the development of conservation and enhancement measures for EFH;
10. A procedure for reviewing and revising, if warranted, the EFH components of the FMP.

The PFMC designated EFH for Pacific Coast groundfish in 2005, and established the EFH components described above in Amendment 19 to the Groundfish FMP. In particular, the Council identified a number of EFH Conservation Areas (EFHCAs) where certain types of bottom-contact gear are prohibited to minimize the adverse effects of the groundfish fishery on EFH. Maps of the EFHCAs are available at: http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/gis_maps/maps/groundfish/map-gfish-efh-close.pdf.

Subsequently, and in accordance with the regulations, NMFS and the Council completed a review of the information available in 2013, and the Council issued a request for proposals on changes to these 10 components. The Council received eight proposals, two of which were later withdrawn by the sponsors. Although these proposals covered a number of the EFH components, the Council determined that revisions were warranted for these five components: The essential fish habitat descriptions for each species and life stage; the description of the adverse effects of fishing on groundfish EFH and management measures to minimize those effects (*i.e.*, the EFHCAs); the description of non-fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH, conservation and enhancement measures that encourage the conservation of EFH; the research and information needs; and the

procedure to review and revise the groundfish EFH components. In addition, minor clarifications and corrections to the FMP are warranted.

Trawl RCA Adjustment

Trawl RCAs are areas that are closed to bottom-trawl gear to protect overfished species, primarily several species of rockfishes, and were first implemented in 2002. The trawl RCAs extend along the entire West Coast and is bounded by lines approximating particular depth contours. In recent years, the Council also considered modifications to control the bycatch of several non-overfished species (*e.g.*, spiny dogfish, longnose skate, and roughey rockfish). In 2011, the trawl fishery was rationalized by Amendment 20 to the groundfish FMP and participants are now individually accountable for their bycatch of individual fishing quota species. Due to the success of this program at reducing bycatch, the Council is now considering making adjustments to the RCA boundaries or eliminating them entirely.

Although the trawl RCAs were implemented to control bycatch of overfished species, the habitats within them have been largely protected from bottom-trawl gear since their inception in 2002, even though trawling for pink shrimp has occurred in some areas. Because of the habitat protections afforded by the RCAs, the habitats that have not been trawled for pink shrimp have recovered, at least partially, from the effects of past bottom trawling. Therefore the Council will evaluate adjustments to the RCA at the same time they are considering revisions to the EFHCAs.

Prohibition of Bottom-Contact Gear in Water Deeper Than 3500 Meters

When the Council adopted Amendment 19 to the groundfish FMP, it attempted to close waters deeper than 3500 meters to bottom trawling to minimize the effects of the fishery on groundfish EFH. However, because EFH did not extend beyond 3500 meters, NMFS disapproved that section of the amendment. The MSA contains several discretionary authorities that the Council may use to close these waters, regardless of their designation as EFH [MSA sections 303(b)(2)(A), 303(b)(2)(B), and 303(b)(12)]. The Council is considering using those authorities to prohibit all bottom-contact gear in waters deeper than 3500 meters unless an exempted fishing permit is issued. At the present time, fishing with such gear at these depths is neither technically nor economically feasible; however, the Council and

NMFS view this as a precautionary measure that may help to protect these pristine and highly sensitive habitats.

Alternatives

NEPA requires that agencies evaluate, in addition to the preferred alternative, a range of reasonable alternatives that addresses the purpose of and need for the agency action. The Council adopted a preliminary range of alternatives for analysis and public review at its meeting in September 2015 and is scheduled to review that range at its April 9–14, 2016, meeting.

Alternatives to address EFH Components: Each of the EFH components has its own set of alternatives. The Council identified 15 action alternatives for analysis to modify the existing EFHCAs that prohibit bottom trawling. They include seven proposals received from various groups of stakeholders and Federal agencies. The proposals can be viewed at: www.pcouncil.org/2013/08/26497/gf-efh-received-proposals/. The seven proposals currently under consideration were submitted by:

1. Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary—a proposal that addresses EFHCAs within the Sanctuary.
2. Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (now the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary)—a proposal that addresses EFHCAs within the Sanctuary.
3. Fishermen's Marketing Association—a proposal to make a small change to the EFHCAs adjacent to the Eel River Canyon.
4. Oceana, National Resources Defense Council, and Ocean Conservancy—a coast-wide proposal for modifying the EFHCAs.
5. Marine Conservation Institute—a coast-wide proposal for modifying the EFHCAs.
6. Greenpeace—a coast-wide proposal for modifying the EFHCAs.
7. Northern and Central Collaborative Working Groups—a coast-wide proposal for modifying the EFHCAs.

In addition to these seven proposals, the Council preliminarily identified other action alternatives for analysis. They are:

8. Reopening those areas identified in the seven proposals described above. This alternative would not designate new areas for closure to bottom trawling. This is a coast-wide alternative.
9. Designating new EFHCAs within the current trawl RCAs, based on priority habitats. This is a coast-wide alternative.
10. Each of the six coast-wide alternatives (4 through 9) include

changes to the EFHCAs within the usual and accustomed fishing areas (U&As) of the four Coastal Treaty Tribes in Washington (Ho, Makah, Quileute, and Quinault). These tribes are co-managers of the fishery resources within their U&As, and NMFS has a treaty-trust responsibility to address their concerns regarding our management decisions. Therefore, for each of these alternatives listed above (numbers 4–9), another alternative will be analyzed that excludes changes in the U&As.

The remaining EFH components each have a single action alternative. They are:

- Use the best scientific information available to revise the descriptions of the habitat requirements for each species and life stage in Appendix B to the FMP (http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/GF_FMP_App_B2.pdf and http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/GF_FMP_App_B3.pdf).
- Use the best scientific information available to revise the description of the adverse effects of fishing on EFH in Appendix C, part 2, to the FMP (http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/GF_FMP_App_C2.pdf).
- Use the best scientific information available to revise the description of the non-fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH, and potential conservation measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those adverse effects in Appendix D to the FMP (http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/GF_FMP_App_D.pdf).
- Update the research and information needs for understanding the EFH requirements of the species managed under this FMP.
- Update the process to review and revise the groundfish EFH components of the FMP.
- Make minor clarifications and corrections to the EFH language in the FMP.

Alternatives to adjust the Trawl RCAs: The Council preliminarily identified three action alternatives for making adjustments to the trawl RCAs. They are:

1. Complete removal of the existing RCAs. This alternative would remove the RCAs along the entire West Coast, restoring access to all of the areas that were previously closed to minimize the bycatch of overfished species.
2. Retaining a subset of the existing RCAs to protect overfished species. This alternative would restore access to some, but not all, of the areas that were closed to minimize bycatch of overfished species. The specific areas that would remain closed have not yet been identified.

3. Retaining a larger subset of the existing RCAs to protect overfished species and act as a catch-control mechanism for non-overfished species of groundfishes. The specific areas that would remain closed have not yet been identified.

Alternative to prohibit bottom-contact gear in water deeper than 3500 meters: The Council preliminarily identified a “no action” alternative that would not use the discretionary authorities and one action alternative that would prohibit bottom-contact gear in waters deeper than 3500 m, the seaward limit of EFH, out to the full extent of the U.S. exclusive economic zone. Waters that meet this description occur off the coast of California only, south of the Gorda Escarpment, and are shown on the map of groundfish EFH at: http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/gis_maps/maps/groundfish/map-gfish-efh.pdf. An exempted fishing permit would be required before any bottom-contact fishery could start up in these waters.

Preliminary Identification of Environmental Issues

A principal objective of the scoping and public input process is to identify potentially significant impacts to the human environment that should be analyzed in depth in the EIS. If, during the preparation of this EIS, NMFS determines that a finding of no significant impact can be supported, it may prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) and issue a retraction of this notice. Alternatively, NMFS may still continue with the preparation of an EIS. Information and analysis prepared for this action also may be used when scoping future groundfish actions to help decide whether to prepare an EA or EIS.

Request for Comments

NMFS provides this notice to: (1) Advise the public and other agencies of its plans to analyze effects related to the action, and (2) obtain suggestions and information that may be useful to the scope of issues and the full range of alternatives to include in the EIS.

NMFS invites comment from all interested parties to ensure that the full range of issues related to Amendment 28 is identified. NMFS is specifically inviting comments on the proposed alternatives described above. In addition, NMFS invites comments on the types of habitats that should be prioritized for protection from the adverse effects of fishing gear. Comments should be as specific as possible.

Written comments concerning the proposed action and the environmental review should be directed to NMFS as described above (see **ADDRESSES**). All comments and materials received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be released to the public.

Public Scoping Process

Public scoping will be conducted through this notice. Further participation by the public will occur throughout the Council's decision-making process. All decisions during the Council process benefit from written and oral public comments delivered prior to or during the Council meeting. These public comments are considered integral to scoping for developing this EIS. Council meetings that offer opportunities for public involvement include the April 9–14, 2016, meeting in Vancouver, Washington (Hilton Vancouver Washington, 301 W. 6th Street, Vancouver, WA 98660). Future opportunities for public involvement have yet to be determined but will be posted in the Council Briefing Book (on the Council's Web site (<http://www.pcouncil.org/council-operations/briefing-books/>) prior to the meeting. For further information on these meetings, visit the Council's Web site, <http://www.pcouncil.org/council-operations/council-meetings/future-meetings/>.

Special Accommodations

The Council meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities.

Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kris Kleinschmidt at Kris.Kleinschmidt@noaa.gov or (503) 820-2280 at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: January 27, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2016-01759 Filed 1-29-16; 8:45 am]

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COMMODITY FUTURES TRADING COMMISSION

Agency Information Collection Activities Under OMB Review

AGENCY: Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

(“PRA”), this notice announces that the Information Collection Request (“ICR”) abstracted below has been forwarded to the Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”) for review and comment. The ICR describes the nature of the information collection and its expected costs and burden.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before March 2, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Comments regarding the burden estimated or any other aspect of the information collection, including suggestions for reducing the burden, may be submitted directly to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (“OIRA”) in OMB, within 30 days of the notice's publication, by email at OIRASubmissions@omb.eop.gov. Please identify the comments by OMB Control No. 3038-0078. Please provide the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (“CFTC” or “Commission”) with a copy of all submitted comments at the address listed below. Please refer to OMB Reference No. 3038-0078, found on <http://reginfo.gov>. Comments may also be mailed to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Attention: Desk Officer for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, 725 17th Street NW., Washington, DC 20503, or submitted through the Agency's Web site at <http://comments.cftc.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments through the Web site.

Comments may also be mailed to: Christopher Kirkpatrick, Secretary of the Commission, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Three Lafayette Centre, 1155 21st Street NW., Washington, DC 20581 or by Hand Delivery/Courier at the same address.

A copy of the supporting statements for the collection of information discussed above may be obtained by visiting <http://RegInfo.gov>. All comments must be submitted in English, or if not, accompanied by an English translation. Comments will be posted as received to <http://www.cftc.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jacob Chachkin, Special Counsel, Division of Swap Dealer and Intermediary Oversight, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, (202) 418-5496, email: jchachkin@cftc.gov, and refer to OMB Control No. 3038-0078.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Conflicts of Interest Policies and Procedures by Futures Commission Merchants and Introducing Brokers (OMB Control No. 3038-0078). This is

a request for an extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: On April 3, 2012, the Commission adopted Commission regulation 1.71 (Conflicts of interest policies and procedures by futures commission merchants and introducing brokers)¹ pursuant to section 4d(c)² of the Commodity Exchange Act (“CEA”). Commission regulation 1.71 requires generally that, among other things, futures commission merchants (“FCM”)³ and introducing brokers (“IB”)⁴ develop conflicts of interest procedures and disclosures, adopt and implement written policies and procedures reasonably designed to ensure compliance with their conflicts of interest and disclosure obligations, and maintain specified records related to those requirements.⁵ The Commission believes that the information collection obligations imposed by Commission regulation 1.71 are essential (i) to ensuring that FCMs and IBs develop and maintain the conflicts of interest systems, procedures and disclosures required by the CEA, and Commission regulations, and (ii) to the effective evaluation of these registrants' actual compliance with the CEA and Commission regulations. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The Commission did not receive any comments on the 60-day **Federal Register** notice, 80 FR 73732, dated November 25, 2015.

Burden Statement: The Commission is revising its estimate of the burden for this collection to reflect the current number of registered FCMs and IBs. Accordingly, the respondent burden for this collection is estimated to be as follows:

Number of Registrants: 1,362.⁶

Estimated Average Burden Hours per Registrant: 44.5.

Estimated Aggregate Burden Hours: 60,609.

Frequency of Recordkeeping/Third-party Disclosure: As applicable.

Authority: 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*

¹ 17 CFR 1.71.

² 7 U.S.C. 6d(c).

³ For the definition of FCM, see section 1a(28) of the CEA and Commission regulation 1.3(p). 7 U.S.C. 1a(28) and 17 CFR 1.3(p).

⁴ For the definition of IB, see section 1a(31) of the CEA and Commission regulation 1.3(mm). 7 U.S.C. 1a(31) and 17 CFR 1.3(mm).

⁵ See 17 CFR 1.71.

⁶ Reflects a slight reduction in the number of registered FCMs and IBs provided in the 60-day **Federal Register** notice, 80 FR 73732 (November 25, 2015).