

Date: February 28, 2011

From: NMFS NW and SW Science Centers and Regions

To: All Interested Parties

Re: Request for information in support of 5-year review of Pacific coast groundfish essential fish habitat (EFH)

Dear Interested Parties,

Background: The implementing regulations to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), as amended in 2007, require regional fishery management councils and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to periodically review the essential fish habitat (EFH) provisions of their fishery management plans (FMPs), and to revise or amend those provisions as warranted, based on available information (50 CFR 600.815(a)(10)). A complete review should be conducted at least once every five years. The review should include, but not be limited to, evaluating published scientific literature and unpublished scientific reports; soliciting information from interested parties; and searching for previously unavailable or inaccessible data. The result of a 5-year review should be a report that summarizes changes in underlying EFH information and a letter from NMFS that documents the completion of the review and makes recommendations for further action. The 5-year review does not necessarily result in FMP amendments. Should the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Council) undertake a change in EFH that warrants an amendment to an FMP, that amendment should outline the procedures the Council will follow to review and update EFH information in the future as recommended by the EFH regulatory guidance.

Essential fish habitat for Pacific coast groundfish was first established and incorporated by the Council into the groundfish FMP through Amendment 11 in 1998. An environmental impact statement (EIS), completed in 2005, evaluated the effects of alternatives for a comprehensive strategy to conserve and enhance EFH for fish managed under the groundfish FMP. Following the EIS, the current designations of EFH for Pacific coast groundfish were approved by NMFS in May 2006. Currently, discussions on the first 5-year review for the EFH provisions of the groundfish FMP have been initiated by the Council, the Science Centers, and the NMFS Regions. As an important component of the review process, the Science Centers and Regions are entering a phase of identifying, gathering, summarizing, and reporting on information that has become available since the EFH designation in 2006.

What is being requested: Information relevant to EFH for the 90+ species of Pacific coast groundfish covered by the groundfish FMP (see attached species list), including the five categories listed below. *Please note that we are not at this time seeking proposals for changes in description or location of existing groundfish EFH. Rather, we are in an information-gathering stage, and will solicit proposals for revised EFH at a later date.*

1. New and updated information on the distribution and extent of seafloor maps, seafloor data, and interpreted Pacific coast groundfish habitat types. This information and data will enhance and refine existing spatial datasets.

2. New and updated information or data on the distribution of biogenic habitats, including new information on associations of groundfishes with these habitats.
3. New and updated information or data on existing and emerging threats to Pacific coast groundfish EFH. Emerging threats include, but are not limited to, climate change, ocean acidification, hypoxia, changes in ocean productivity cycles, and anthropogenic activities such as alternative energy development.
4. New and updated information or data on potential habitat components (e.g., prey species, dissolved oxygen, water temperature) and specific habitat types (e.g., rocky banks, soft-bottom, deep corals) utilized by Pacific coast groundfishes that can be used to revise the descriptions of EFH.
5. New and updated information or data on the importance of specific types of habitats to the life history of Pacific coast groundfishes, which can be used to designate Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC).

Information obtained from this data call will be used to develop products and a report, representing one important step in the 5-year review of Pacific coast groundfish EFH. Your assistance in identifying and providing new and updated information and data will be critical to this report. Note: we are interested in identifying both data sets that are in a finished form for application and integration, and those that may require additional effort or time to make them accessible.

NMFS staff from the Science Centers and Regional Offices will review preliminary documents, products, and the report that incorporate information from this data call. Further review, including final stakeholder and public involvement, will occur through the normal Council review process and specifically the Groundfish EFH Review Committee, Habitat Committee, and Scientific and Statistical Committee. The Council review provides an opportunity to solicit information from other sources, per the EFH implementation regulations, and includes a public review process for the final report.

Timing: Relevant and *emerging* information is being solicited during the period March through July 1, 2011, and can be submitted either through email or postal service at (*early submissions are encouraged*):

Email: groundfishEFH@noaa.gov

Mail: "Groundfish EFH data call"
NOAA Fisheries NWFSC
2032 SE OSU Drive
Newport, OR 97365

Questions about this solicitation should be directed to:

Waldo Wakefield, NOAA Fisheries NWFSC, 541-867-0542, email: waldo.wakefield@noaa.gov

Mary Yoklavich, NOAA Fisheries SWFSC, 831-420-3940, email: mary.yoklavich@noaa.gov

Pacific Coast Groundfish

Flatfishes

Arrowtooth flounder, *Atheresthes stomias*
Dover sole, *Microstomus pacificus*
English sole, *Parophrys vetulus*
Petrale sole, *Eopsetta jordani*

Other flatfishes

Butter sole, *Isopsetta isolepis*
Curlfin sole, *Pleuronichthys decurrens*
Flathead sole, *Hippoglossoides elassodon*
Pacific sanddab, *Citharichthys sordidus*
Rex sole, *Glyptocephalus zachirus*
Rock sole, *Lepidopsetta bilineata*
Sand sole, *Psettichthys melanostictus*
Starry flounder, *Platichthys stellatus*

Rockfishes

Black rockfish, *Sebastes melanops*
Blackgill rockfish, *Sebastes melanostomus*
Bocaccio, *Sebastes paucispinis*
Canary rockfish, *Sebastes pinniger*
Chilipepper, *Sebastes goodie*
Cowcod, *Sebastes levis*
Darkblotched rockfish, *Sebastes crameri*
Longspine thornyhead, *Sebastolobus altivelis*
Pacific ocean perch, *Sebastes alutus*
Shortbelly rockfish, *Sebastes jordani*
Shortspine thornyhead, *Sebastolobus alascanus*
Splitnose rockfish, *Sebastes diploproa*
Widow rockfish, *Sebastes entomelas*
Yelloweye rockfish, *Sebastes ruberrimus*
Yellowtail rockfish, *Sebastes flavidus*

Other rockfishes

Aurora rockfish, *Sebastes aurora*
Bank rockfish, *Sebastes rufus*
Black-and-yellow rockfish, *Sebastes chrysomelas*
Blue rockfish, *Sebastes mystinus*
Bronzespotted rockfish, *Sebastes gilli*
Brown rockfish, *Sebastes auriculatus*
Calico rockfish, *Sebastes dallii*
California scorpionfish, *Scorpaena guttata*
Chameleon rockfish, *Sebastes phillipsi*
China rockfish, *Sebastes nebulosus*
Copper rockfish, *Sebastes caurinus*
Dusky rockfish, *Sebastes ciliatus*
Dwarf-red rockfish, *Sebastes rufinanus*
Flag rockfish, *Sebastes rubrivinctus*
Freckled rockfish, *Sebastes lentiginosus*
Gopher rockfish, *Sebastes carnatus*
Grass rockfish, *Sebastes rastrelliger*
Greenblotched rockfish, *Sebastes rosenblatti*

Greenspotted rockfish, *Sebastes chlorostictus*
Greenstriped rockfish, *Sebastes elongates*
Halfbanded rockfish, *Sebastes semicinctus*
Harlequin rockfish, *Sebastes variegatus*
Honeycomb rockfish, *Sebastes umbrosus*
Kelp rockfish, *Sebastes atrovirens*
Mexican rockfish, *Sebastes macdonaldi*
Olive rockfish, *Sebastes serranoides*
Pink rockfish, *Sebastes eos*
Pinkrose rockfish, *Sebastes simulator*
Puget Sound rockfish, *Sebastes emphaeus*
Pygmy rockfish, *Sebastes wilsoni*
Quillback rockfish, *Sebastes maliger*
Redbanded rockfish, *Sebastes babcocki*
Redstripe rockfish, *Sebastes proriger*
Rosethorn rockfish, *Sebastes helvomaculatus*
Rosy rockfish, *Sebastes rosaceus*
Rougheye rockfish, *Sebastes aleutianus*
Semaphore rockfish, *Sebastes melanosema*
Sharpchin rockfish, *Sebastes zacentrus*
Shortraker rockfish, *Sebastes borealis*
Silvergray rockfish, *Sebastes brevispinis*
Speckled rockfish, *Sebastes ovalis*
Squarespot rockfish, *Sebastes hopkinsi*
Starry rockfish, *Sebastes constellatus*
Stripetail rockfish, *Sebastes saxicola*
Swordspine rockfish, *Sebastes ensifer*
Tiger rockfish, *Sebastes nigrocinctus*
Treefish, *Sebastes serriceps*
Vermilion rockfish, *Sebastes miniatus*
Yellowmouth rockfish, *Sebastes reedi*

Other groundfishes

Cabazon, *Scorpaenichthys marmoratus*
Lingcod, *Ophiodon elongatus*
Pacific cod, *Gadus macrocephalus*
Pacific hake, *Merluccius productus*
Sablefish, *Anoplopoma fimbria*
Big skate, *Raja binoculata*
California skate, *Raja inornata*
Kelp greenling, *Hexagrammos decagrammus*
Leopard shark, *Triakis semifasciata*
Longnose skate, *Raja rhina*
Pacific flatnose, *Antimora microlepis*
Pacific grenadier, *Coryphaenoides acrolepis*
Spiny dogfish, *Squalus acanthias*
Spotted ratfish, *Hydrolagus colliciei*
Tope, *Galeorhinus galeus*