

Science, Service, Stewardship



Essential Fish Habitat 5-Year Reviews What, Why, and How?

Karen Abrams
NMFS Office of Habitat
Conservation
January 14, 2010

**NOAA
FISHERIES
SERVICE**



What is an EFH 5-year review?

- A documented comparison of information used to support all current EFH provisions against any new information not previously considered or available.
- The results of the review will determine whether or not FMP amendments are needed.
- Can be initiated by the Council or NMFS – but should be certified as complete by the regional NMFS office.



Need for a Review:



- Councils are better positioned to respond to piece-meal proposals to protect EFH from fishing.
- NMFS can be more effective protecting habitat from non-fishing impacts.
- Science and management landscape constantly changing
 - New science (ex. Deep coral)
 - New management:
 - Changes to FMUs, New closures
 - New Coastal Marine Spatial Planning Framework (EFH data used frequently, ecosystem-based approaches to management central)



More reasons for an EFH review:

- Comply with the “no less than every 5-years” schedule laid out in the EFH regulatory guidelines.
- Ensure use of best available science according to National Standard 2.
- Provide budget and program accountability.



How to do a 5-year review?

- Review EFH regulatory guidelines (50 CFR 600.815(a)(10)).
- Work with your NMFS regional habitat staff contacts.
- Consider options for using SAFE reports and taking advantage of existing Council processes and collaborations.



How? – Roles of NMFS and Council

- Flexibility depending on specific NMFS Regional/Council processes.
- NMFS role: certifying that the review is complete for internal accountability.
- Councils role: take necessary action as a result of the review through amendment processes.



National Status (annual snapshots)

- In 2009 – 67% of FMPs supporting EFH information had been reviewed in the past five years.
- If all reviews were completed every five years, would be at 100%.
- In 2010 – drops to 53%
- In 2011 – drops to 33%
- In 2012 – drops to 30%



Progress:

- Reviews have already been initiated by most Councils and/or regions.
- We are committed to supporting ongoing progress on regional/Council reviews.
- Over the last three years, HQ has competitively awarded \$500,000 to regions to refine EFH in support of EFH reviews.



Parting Thoughts on EFH Reviews:

- Strengthens Council position on overall fish conservation and management objectives.
- Can be integrated into ongoing Council ecosystem planning.
- Supports national Coastal Marine Spatial Planning.
- As an ongoing requirement, continue to plan accordingly.