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NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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D3 Essential Fish Habitat 5-year Review Plan

February 2026

Action Memo

Council Staff: Anita Kroska

Other Presenters: Dr. Jodi Pirtle, Molly Zaleski, Dr. Mallarie Yeager, Dr. Mason Smith (NMFS Alaska Region); Dr. T. Scott Smeltz (FAST Lab)

Action Required:

1. Review the Discussion Paper with a proposed plan for the 2028 EFH 5-year Review
2. Review the Discussion Paper with a proposed plan for Component 1, Descriptions and Maps Methods
3. Review the Discussion Paper with a proposed plan for Component 2, Fishing Effects Methods
4. Provide direction regarding the scope and focus of the proposed plans

1 BACKGROUND

The SSC will receive a presentation on three discussion papers that include the overall proposed approach for the 2028 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) 5-year Review, and in-depth methodological plans for Components 1 (EFH descriptions and maps) and Component 2 (fishing effects). At the December 2025 meeting, the Council reviewed and advanced the workplan and agreed that the approach reflects the current priorities of the Council and NMFS ([Dec 2025 Council motion](#)). The Ecosystem Committee is scheduled to receive an informational presentation on the overall work plan at their inaugural meeting in March 2026.

As specified in the regulations and guidelines that implement the EFH provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), the Councils and NMFS are required to review the EFH components of Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and revise or amend these components based on available information at least every five years. This process, and the summary report that results, is referred to as an EFH 5-year Review. The objective of an EFH 5-year review is to evaluate and synthesize new information for each of the ten EFH components and determine whether changes to the FMPs are warranted. The opportunity to advance the science supporting an EFH 5-year review is also an important reason for this endeavor.

EFH 5-year Review plan

Development of the EFH 5-year Review is a multi-year effort, and staff are seeking input from the SSC now, at the outset, on the overall scope and any key questions they wish staff to explore. As described in the 5-year Review plan [discussion paper](#), the proposal focuses on the Council's BSAI and GOA Groundfish and BSAI Crab FMP species, and the following components are currently prioritized:

- Component 1: EFH descriptions and identification
- Component 2: Fishing activities that may adversely affect EFH
- Component 6: Conservation and enhancement of EFH
- Component 7: Changes to the availability of major prey species for Council-managed species
- Component 9: Research and information needs for EFH description and evaluation of impacts
- Component 10: Review and revision of EFH components of FMPs

Component 1: Descriptions and Maps Methods

At this meeting, staff are seeking SSC input on the overall scope of planned Component 1 updates for the 2028 EFH Review; proposed updates to the ensemble species distribution model (SDM) EFH maps, including new species and environmental covariate data and methods; and new spatial-temporal SDM (STM) EFH maps, including data, methods, and application (see the [discussion paper](#)). The SSC may have the opportunity at a future meeting to provide input on draft 2028 EFH ensemble SDM maps with new data and covariate updates, as well as results from additional BSAI crab research.

The proposed scope of review and updates for EFH component 1 descriptions and maps includes a subset of FMP species to focus on top priorities in light of capacity constraints for both the Council and NMFS. The subset includes sablefish, pollock, Pacific cod, Pacific ocean perch, and arrowtooth flounder in the BSAI and GOA FMPs, and all five species of crab in the Crab FMP. With this proposed scope, EFH component 1 will maintain status quo in the Arctic, Salmon, and Scallop FMPs.

Component 2: Fishing Effects Methods

At this meeting, staff are also seeking SSC input on the overall scope of planned Component 2 updates for the 2028 EFH Review; proposed updates to the fishing effects (FE) model data inputs, including fishing effort, the Gear Parameter Table, sediment observations, recovery and susceptibility rates; and 2028 EFH Review FE model runs, planned advancements, and associated bridging analyses (see the [discussion paper](#)). The SSC may have the opportunity to review the proposed methods for the stock assessment author FE evaluation at a future meeting.