

structured to account for the interactions between healthy and overfished stocks, and between the different fisheries and particular overfished stocks. Not all overfished stocks are incidentally caught in all fishery sectors. Therefore, management measures will differ by sector in order to allow access to healthy stock harvest while ensuring that overfished stocks are rebuilt as quickly as possible.

#### **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. This process is also intended to eliminate from detailed study the issues that are not significant, or which have been covered in prior environmental reviews. Narrowing the scope of analysis is intended to allow greater focus on those impacts that are potentially most significant. NMFS and the Council will evaluate the impacts of the proposed action on these components of the biological and physical environment: (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, which may be considered under NEPA, or under the RFA and E.O. 12866, 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) communities.

#### **Public Scoping Process**

Public scoping will primarily occur during the Council's decision-making process. All decisions during the Council process benefit from written and verbal comments delivered prior to or during the Council meetings. NMFS and the Council consider these public

comments as integral to scoping for developing this EIS. The Council developed its preliminary range of 2007–2008 harvest specifications and management measures at its October 31–November 4, 2005, meeting in San Diego, CA. This was the same meeting at which the Council decided to expand the scope of this EIS. The Council will select the preferred range of management measures at the April 2–7, 2006, meeting in Sacramento, CA, at the Double Tree Hotel, 2001 Point West Way, 9815–4702; telephone: 800–227–6963 or 1–800–222–8733. The Council expects to select the preferred alternative at the June 11–16, 2006, meeting in Foster City, CA at the Crowne Plaza Mid Peninsula Hotel, 1221 Chess Drive, 94404; telephone 1–800–227–6963 or 650–570–5700. Public comment may be made under the agenda items, when the Council will consider these proposed actions. The agendas for these meetings will be available from the Council website, or by request from the Council office in advance of the meetings (see **ADDRESSES**). Written comments on the scope of issues and alternatives may also be submitted as described under **ADDRESSES**.

NMFS invites comments and suggestions on the scope of the analysis to be included in the DEIS. The scope includes the range of alternatives to be considered, and potentially significant impacts to the human environment that should be evaluated in the DEIS. NMFS and the Council plan to make the DEIS available for public comment following the Council's June 2006 meeting. The comment period on the DEIS will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability appears in the **Federal Register**. To be most helpful, comments on the DEIS should be as specific as possible and should address the adequacy of the statement or merits of the alternatives discussed. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the DEIS. Comments may also address the adequacy of the DEIS or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the DEIS. (Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points). Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

#### **Special Accommodations**

These meetings are accessible to people with physical disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Carolyn Porter 503–820–2280 (voice) or 503–820–2299 (fax), at least 5 days prior to the scheduled meeting date.

Dated: March 9, 2006.

**Alan D. Risenhoover**,  
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.  
[FR Doc. E6–3634 Filed 3–13–06; 8:45 am]  
**BILLING CODE 3510–22–S**

---

#### **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

##### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[I.D. 030806B]

##### **Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Groundfish Fisheries in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska**

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

**ACTION:** Notice; intent to prepare an environmental impact statement; request for written comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces its intent to prepare the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries. The scope of the EIS will be to determine the impacts to the human environment resulting from setting groundfish harvest specifications. NMFS will hold a public scoping meeting and accept written comments from the public to determine the issues of concern and the appropriate range of management alternatives to be addressed in the EIS.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received by May 15, 2006. A scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 4, 2006, from 7 to 9 p.m., Alaska local time.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments on issues and alternatives for the EIS should be sent to Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, Attn: Records Officer. Comments may be submitted by:

• E-mail:

*EIS.Specifications.Intent@noaa.gov*.  
Include in the subject line the following

document identifier: Harvest Specs. E-mail comments, with or without attachments, are limited to 5 megabytes.

- Mail: P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802.

- Hand Delivery to the Federal Building: 709 West 9th Street, Room 420A, Juneau, AK.

- Fax: 907-586-7557.

*Meeting address:* The meeting will be held in the Dillingham/Katmai room at the Hilton Hotel, 500 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Anchorage, AK.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ben Muse, (907) 586-7228 or [ben.muse@noaa.gov](mailto:ben.muse@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS is initiating this scoping process for the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications EIS. NEPA requires preparation of an EIS for major Federal actions that may significantly impact the quality of the human environment. NMFS will incorporate into the EIS the written comments on the scope of the analysis generated during this scoping process.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), the United States has exclusive fishery management authority over all living marine resources found within the exclusive economic zone. The management of these marine resources, with the exception of certain marine mammals and birds, is vested in the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary).

NMFS is seeking information from the public through the EIS scoping process on the range of alternatives to be analyzed, and on the environmental, social, and economic issues to be considered in the analysis.

### Proposed Action

The proposed action is to set the harvest specifications in compliance with Federal regulations, the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Harvest specifications include the establishment of annual total allowable catches (TACs), and their seasonal apportionments and allocations, and prohibited species catch limits. TACs are harvest quotas that include retained and discarded catch.

Each year, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) recommends to the Secretary harvest specifications for the BSAI and the GOA groundfish fisheries. The Council establishes the harvest specifications using the overfishing levels and acceptable biological catches (ABCs) established by the Council's Groundfish

Plan Teams and Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the optimum yield ranges established in the FMPs.

After Secretarial review and approval, NMFS publishes the harvest specifications in the **Federal Register**. NMFS uses these harvest specifications to manage the groundfish fisheries.

The intent of the harvest specifications is to balance fish harvest during the fishing year with established total optimum yields and ecosystem needs. The harvest specifications are necessary for the management of the groundfish fisheries and the conservation of marine resources, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act and as described in the management policy, goals, and objectives in the groundfish FMPs.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to assist the public in understanding the proposed action. These definitions are summarized from the FMPs, please refer to the FMPs for the exact language and additional details.

*Optimum yield (OY)* is the amount of fish that will provide the greatest overall benefit to the Nation, taking into account the protection of marine ecosystems.

*Overfishing level (OFL)* is set annually for a stock or stock complex following the criteria in the FMPs. Overfishing occurs when the harvest exceeds the overfishing level.

*Acceptable biological catch (ABC)* is an annual sustainable target harvest for a stock or stock complex. It is derived from the status and dynamics of the stock, environmental conditions, and other ecological factors, given the prevailing technological characteristics of the fishery.

*Total allowable catch (TAC)* is the annual harvest limit for a stock or stock complex, derived from the ABC by considering social and economic factors.

### Alternatives

NMFS will evaluate a range of alternative harvest levels. Alternatives may include those identified here, and those developed through the public scoping process and through the Council process.

The alternatives in this analysis are based on a range of potential TACs because the harvest specifications are driven by the available ABCs and the Optimum Yield ranges that the Council considers each year when recommending TACs to NMFS. Each of the four alternatives represents different amounts of TAC that could be specified for managed species and species groups for each fishing year. The alternatives

have been selected to display a wide range of TACs and their impacts on the environment. The four potential alternatives identified for analysis include:

*Alternative 1:* Set TACs to produce harvest levels equal to the maximum permissible ABCs, unless the sum of the TACs is constrained by the Optimum Yield established in the FMPs.

*Alternative 2:* Set TACs that fall within the range of ABCs recommended by the Council's Groundfish Plan Teams and TACs recommended by the Council.

*Alternative 3:* For stocks with a high level of scientific information, set TACs to produce harvest levels equal to the most recent five-year average actual fishing mortality rates. For stocks with insufficient scientific information, set TACs equal to the most recent five-year average actual catch.

*Alternative 4:* Set TACs equal to zero. This is the no action alternative, but does not reflect the status quo.

### Preliminary Identification of 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 the EIS process. NMFS has conducted an initial screening to identify potentially significant impacts resulting from the harvest specifications. The analysis will evaluate the effects of the alternatives for all resources, species, and issues that may directly or indirectly interact with the groundfish fisheries within the action area, as a result of specified harvest levels. Impacts to the following components of the biological and physical environment may be evaluated: (1) Essential fish habitat; (2) species listed under the Endangered Species Act and their critical habitat, and species protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act; (3) target and non-target fish stocks, including forage fish and prohibited species; (4) seabirds; and (5) the ecosystem.

Social and economic impacts also are considered in terms of the effects that changes in projected harvests will have on the following groups of individuals: (1) Those who participate in harvesting the fishery resources and other living marine resources; (2) those who process and market fish and fish products; (3) those who consume fish products; (4) those who rely on living marine resources in the management area, either for subsistence needs or for recreational benefits; (5) those who benefit from non-consumptive uses of living marine resources; and (6) fishing communities.

## Public Involvement

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in an EIS and for identifying the significant issues related to the proposed action. A principal objective of the scoping and public involvement process is to identify a reasonable range of management alternatives that, with adequate analysis, will delineate critical issues and provide a clear basis for distinguishing between those alternatives and for selecting a preferred alternative. In addition, NMFS is notifying the public that it is beginning an EIS and decision-making process for this proposed action so that interested or affected people may participate in the EIS and contribute to the final decision.

NMFS is seeking written public comments on the scope of issues that should be addressed in the EIS and alternatives that should be considered in establishing the harvest specifications. NMFS will accept comments in writing at the address above (see **ADDRESSES**). Written comments should be as specific as possible to be the most helpful. Written comments received during the scoping process, including the names and addresses of those submitting them, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

The public is invited to attend the scoping meeting on Tuesday, April 4, 2006, in Anchorage, AK. The scoping meeting will be held in conjunction with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting.

Please visit the NMFS Alaska Region web page at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov> for more information on this EIS, guidance for submitting effective public comments, and to order a draft EIS. NMFS estimates that a draft EIS will be available in September 2006.

## Special Accommodations

These meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Ben Muse, NMFS, (see **ADDRESSES**), (907) 586 7228, at least five days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: March 9, 2006.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. E6-3628 Filed 3-13-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Docket No. 030602141-6032-35; I.D. 022706A]

### Announcement of Funding Opportunity for the California Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program, Adult and Community Watershed Education in the Monterey Bay

**AGENCY:** National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP), the National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice; availability of funds.

**SUMMARY:** The California B-WET Program, Adult and Community Watershed Education in the Monterey Bay is accepting proposals that provide meaningful watershed education to adults and communities. The Monterey Bay is susceptible to impacts from urban, rural, and agricultural sources of pollution. Projects funded under this program will be outcome-based programs that educate citizens about their role in protecting water quality and demonstrate behavioral changes that improve water quality and promote environmental stewardship.

**DATES:** Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. Pacific standard time on April 13, 2006. The deadline for applying through Grants.gov is April 13, 2006.

**ADDRESSES:** Paper applications, a signed original and 2 copies (submission of eight additional hard copies is strongly encouraged to expedite the review process, but it is not required) may be submitted to Attn: Seaberry Nachbar, B-WET Program Manager, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Office, 299 Foam Street, Monterey, CA 93940. For electronic submissions, see Electronic Submission section under

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** B-WET Program Manager: Seaberry Nachbar, 831-647-4204, via Internet at [Seaberry.Nachbar@noaa.gov](mailto:Seaberry.Nachbar@noaa.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### Summary Description

The California B-WET Program, Adult and Community Watershed Education, is a competitively based program that supports existing environmental education programs, fosters the growth of new programs, and encourages the development of partnerships among environmental education programs throughout the

Monterey Bay watershed. Funded projects provide meaningful watershed education to adults and communities. The term "meaningful watershed education" is defined as outcome-based programs that educate citizens about their role in protecting water quality and demonstrate behavioral changes that improve water quality and promote environmental stewardship.

#### Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that approximately \$100,000 may be available in FY 2006 in award amounts to be determined by the proposals and the available funds. The National Marine Sanctuary Program anticipates that approximately two to four grants will be awarded with these funds. The National Marine Sanctuary Program anticipates that typical project awards will range from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

#### Electronic Submission

It is strongly preferred that you submit your application through Grants.gov at the internet site: <http://www.grants.gov>. You may access, download, and submit an electronic grant application through Grants.gov. The full funding announcement is available via the Grants.gov web site: <http://www.grants.gov>. The announcement will also be available at the NOAA web site <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/bwet> or by contacting the program official outlined in this **Federal Register** notice. Applicants must comply with all requirements contained in the full funding opportunity announcement. NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov. Statutory Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1440, 15 U.S.C. 1540  
CFDA: 11.429, Marine Sanctuary Program

#### Eligibility

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, state or local government agencies, and Indian tribal governments. The Department of Commerce/ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that service undeserved areas.

#### Cost Sharing Requirements

No cost sharing is required under this program; however, the National Marine