

The MSA requires FMP's to:

“Describe and identify essential fish habitat for the fishery based on the guidelines established by the Secretary under section 305(b)(1)(A), minimize to the extent practicable adverse effects on such habitat caused by fishing, and identify other actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of such habitat”

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EFH Final Rule and adverse effects:

“Each FMP must contain an evaluation of the potential adverse effects of fishing on EFH designated under the FMP, including effects of each fishing activity regulated under the FMP or other Federal FMPs.

This evaluation should consider the effects of each fishing activity on each type of habitat found within EFH.

FMPs must describe each fishing activity, review and discuss all available relevant information...and provide conclusions regarding whether and how each fishing activity adversely affects EFH.

The evaluation should also consider the cumulative effects of multiple fishing activities on EFH.”


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The SASI Model

- The SASI model was designed with these guidelines in mind, and can be used to:
 - Estimate which locations are relatively more or less vulnerable to fishing by particular gear types (i.e., which areas are more likely to accumulate adverse effects)
 - Estimate the current magnitude and location of adverse effects to EFH from fishing activities
 - Predict the magnitude and locations of adverse effects for various management scenarios


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Gear restricted areas

- Term 'gear restricted areas' is perhaps more appropriate than 'closed areas' given that this is an omnibus plan, and current habitat closure areas do not have restrictions for all gear types
- This puts the focus on gear types, to which habitats have differential vulnerabilities
- Accurate assumptions about which habitat types can be fished by which gears will be critical for evaluating the impacts of these kind of alternatives

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Research areas

- Goal of the amendment was to update research and information needs, including consideration of dedicated habitat research areas
- Given the inconclusive nature of most gear effects studies, and the broad uncertainties highlighted by the model, it may be appropriate for the Council to consider newly opened, newly closed, and/or retained gear restricted areas as habitat research areas

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What were the original goals?

1. Update EFH designations
2. Identify major fishing and non-fishing threats to EFH
3. Review and update prey species information
4. Identify mechanisms to protect EFH
5. Define measurable thresholds for achieving the requirements to minimize adverse effects
6. Integrate and optimize measures to minimize adverse effects across all Council managed FMPs
7. Update research and information needs, including consideration of dedicated habitat research areas

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Committee motion 1

Evaluate the appropriateness of the current boundaries of the closed areas in obtaining the goals of the amendment using the SASI model simulat[ion] runs.

Areas would be evaluated with respect to all gear types. The intention of the motion was to examine all three sets of EFH closures (groundfish, scallop, monkfish), the year-round groundfish closed areas, and gear restricted areas, in terms of whether or not they encompass vulnerable EFH.


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Committee motion 2

Provide the committee with any suggested modifications to the boundaries of the existing closed areas that would better meet the goals of the amendment. This includes suggestions of any new closed areas and elimination of any closed areas.


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Committee motions 3 and 4

- 3. Evaluate boundaries of existing or proposed HAPCs in obtaining the goals of the amendment.**
- 4. Provide committee with any suggested modifications of the boundaries of the existing or proposed HAPCs that would better meet the goals of the amendment. This includes suggestions of any new HAPCs and elimination of any HAPCs.**


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Criteria for HAPCs (from EFH Final Rule)

1. Importance of historic or current ecological function
2. Sensitivity to anthropogenic stresses
3. Extent of current or future development stresses
4. Rarity of the habitat type

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Committee motion 5

In existing or potential closed areas, provide the committee with an analysis of metrics to characterize the tradeoffs between habitat impacts and fisheries benefits.

- *These metrics will involve data on the value of landings associated with area swept/adverse effects*
- *Revenue data already compiled is aggregated at the trip level and is therefore gear-specific, but not species specific*

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Committee motion 6

Provide a list of potential appropriate sites to protect deep-sea corals.

Partial list of issues to consider:

- *Known coral distributions vs. inferred coral distributions*
- *Degree of precaution desired*
- *Designations of sites under 303(b) authority or EFH authority (or both)*
 - *Has consultation implications, as well as implications for the type of analysis required*
- *Concurrent HAPC designation of areas*
- *Management measures associated with sites*
- *Formal or informal cooperation with MAFMC and/or ASMFC*


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Adverse effects determination

- The total amount of adverse effects of fishing on EFH have declined substantially since mid 1990s
- The alternatives developed in Phase 2 will, collectively, represent an attempt to optimize the spatial distribution of adverse effects


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Developing alternatives using SASI

- Using the SASI model, or other information as appropriate, the PDT will develop recommendations about Phase 2 alternatives prior to the next committee meeting
- However, there will continue to be uncertainties surrounding the habitat benefits and environmental impacts of various proposals and professional judgment will be required in order to select a suite of alternatives
- The SASI model is an enhanced decision making tool, but does not replace the judgment of the Committee or the Council

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Timeline

- Late May/early June – PDT meeting to review SASI analyses, coral information, HAPC information, and practicability metrics, and to develop recommendations for committee
- Early June – Committee meeting to develop list of alternatives for Phase 2 DEIS
- Late June – Council meeting to approve/reject committee alternatives and suggest additional options
- Summer – PDT analysis; committee refines alternatives and selects preferred alternatives
- September – Council selects preferred alternatives

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