



Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we enclose for your review Amendment 24 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (PCGFMP); Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Harvest Specifications and Management Measures for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery, RIN 0648-BE27.

This FEIS, prepared pursuant to NEPA, assesses the environmental impacts associated with the upcoming decision on the harvest specifications and management measures for the 2015-2016 biennial management period, including considerations on the reorganization of stocks managed within assemblages. The 2015-2014 groundfish harvest specifications and management measures set fishery specifications for all 90+ groundfish species, including overfished species. The proposed management measures revise the existing regulations such that the catch of groundfish is projected to stay within the annual specifications while allowing for the harvest of the healthy stocks that co-occur with overfished species. Amendment 24 would amend the PCGFMP to establish default harvest control rules for future decision making. The FEIS assesses environmental impacts associated with using default harvest control rules in future biennial management periods.

Additional copies of the FEIS may be obtained from the Responsible Program Official identified below. The document is also accessible electronically through the National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region and the Pacific Fishery Management Council websites (www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish/index.html and www.pcouncil.org).

NOAA is not required to respond to comments received during the agency's 30-day comment period as a result of the issuance of the FEIS. However, comments received **within 30 days of publication of the notice of availability** in the Federal Register will be reviewed and considered for their impact on issuance of a record of decision (ROD). Please send comments to the responsible official identified below. The ROD will be made available publicly following final agency action.

Responsible Program Official: **Frank Lockhart**
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Sincerely,

Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure

