APPENDIX J

Scoping Notice

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Crews, A.K. 1939. A study of the Oregon white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus leucurus* (Douglas). M.S. thesis. Oregon State College. Corvallis. 46 pp.
Gavin, T.A. 1984. Pacific Northwest. *in*: White-tailed deer, ecology and management. L.K. Halls, editor. A Wildlife Management Institute publication. Pages 491–492.
Gavin, T.A. 1978. Status of the Columbian white-tailed deer: some quantitative uses of biogeographic data. Pages 185–202 *in*: Threatened Deer. IUCN. Morges, Switzerland. 434 pp.
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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. 1995. Columbian white-tailed deer biological status assessment. Report to Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. 83 pp.
Smith, W.P. 1985. Current geographic distribution and abundance on the Columbian white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus leucurus* (Douglas). Northwest Science 59:243–251.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1983. Revised Columbian white-tailed deer recovery plan. Portland, Oregon. 75 pp.

Author: The primary author of this notice is Barbara Behan of the Regional Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97232–4181 (telephone 503/231–6131).

Authority

The authority of this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: October 26, 1999.

Thomas Dwyer,

Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[I.D. 102699G]

Groundfish Fisheries of the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Area

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

ACTION: Notification of draft alternatives; extension of scoping and comment period.

SUMMARY: NMFS is publishing draft alternatives to be analyzed in a programmatic supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) on Federal groundfish fishery management in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off Alaska. This document also provides an extension of the scoping period from November 15 until December 15, 1999.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before December 15, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Lori Gravel, Sustainable Fisheries Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802. Comments may also be hand delivered to Room 457–1 Federal Office Building, 907 West 9 Street, Juneau, AK.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steven Davis, NMFS, (907) 271-3523 or steven.k.davis@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS published in the **Federal Register**, a notice of intent to prepare an SEIS on Federal groundfish fishery management in the EEZ off Alaska and announced scoping meetings (64 FR 53305, October 1, 1999). The reason for undertaking the analysis, and the issues to be analyzed, are detailed in the notice of intent and are not repeated here. In the notice, NMFS indicated that, prior to the scoping meetings, NMFS will publish in the **Federal Register** draft alternatives to be developed further during the scoping process.

NMFS manages the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries to achieve the goals and objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for the Groundfish Fisheries in the BSAI Area, and the Groundfish of the GOA. The goals and objectives reflect the complicated array of often competing concerns that affect the Alaska groundfish fisheries. In some instances, contradictory objectives are articulated within a single goal. For example, paraphrasing from the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the FMPs, we find they generally contain the following goals and objectives: Assure continuing availability of food supply and recreational opportunities; minimize irreversible adverse effects on fishery resources and the marine environment, including essential fish habitat; maximize economic benefits to the Nation and to the states; provide for sustained participation of fishing communities; minimize waste, reduce bycatch and the mortality of bycatch, encourage development of underused fisheries; control effort; promote equitable allocations; keep management options open for the future; prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks; manage stocks as a unit; promote protection of the safety of human life at sea; promote regulatory and fishing efficiency; use the best available data; account for all fishery related removals. In deciding on particular new management measures, NMFS and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council review reasonable alternatives for achieving one or more of those goals and objectives, then base decisions according to the views of competing interests and concerns.

With this programmatic environmental impact analysis, NMFS will evaluate how successfully the current management regime achieves those goals and objectives. The SEIS will support these determinations by presenting an analysis of the environmental impacts of the current regime and compare them to configurations of alternatives management measures that would also achieve those goals and objectives.

Alternatives

NMFS has chosen to analyze broad thematic alternatives that will provide, in a programmatic sense, a conceptual framework for understanding how effectively alternative harvest management regimes achieve the articulated goals and objectives and what their environmental impacts would be. The SEIS will look at the themes: (1) Who harvests groundfish; (2) what groundfish is harvested; (3) when and where is groundfish harvested; and (4) how groundfish is harvested. Sub-alternatives will be developed for each theme. The alternatives and sub-alternatives NMFS is currently considering include the following:

Allocative Schemes (Who harvests groundfish?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo: Allocation of groundfish harvest is currently based on the species or species group and is made to individuals, cooperatives, and Olympic-style fisheries (i.e., non-Community Development Quota (CDQ), non-Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fisheries) by sector.

Sub-alternative 2 - IFQ: Expand or reduce allocations to individuals by species or species group.

Sub-alternative 3 - Cooperatives: Expand or reduce allocations to cooperatives by species or species group.

Sub-alternative 4 - Open access: Reduce or remove limited access systems.

Sub-alternative 5 - Allocation: Expand or reduce the use of sector allocations or alter the amounts of allocations.

Sub-alternative 6 - License Limitation: Expand or reduce the use of license limitation.

Harvest Level (What is harvested?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo: Total Allowable Catch levels (TACs) are set by species or species group and the sum of the TACs must stay within the OY of the groundfish complex.

Sub-alternative 2 - Increase the TACs: Set fishing mortality equal to the maximum acceptable biological catch (going above OY of the groundfish complex).

Sub-alternative 3 - Decrease the TACs: Set fishing mortality equal to 50 percent of the maximum acceptable biological catch.

Sub-alternative 4 - Stabilize the TACs: Set fishing mortality equal to the 1994–1998 average fishing mortality.

Sub-alternative 5 - Authorize zero harvest: Set the TACs at zero.

Time/Area Closures (When and Where does harvest occur?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo: Numerous time/area closure schemes are currently in use serving to achieve various conservation objectives. Among the purposes served are closures to minimize fishery interactions with species listed under the Endangered Species Act, prohibited species, and crab habitat.

Sub-alternative 2 - Steller sea lion focus: Add additional closures based on their potential to minimize indirect interactions with Steller sea lion foraging habitat.

Sub-alternative 3 - Prohibited species focus: Add additional closures based on their potential to minimize take of prohibited species.

Sub-alternative 4 - Habitat focus: Add additional closures based on their potential to minimize disturbance of marine substrates.

Sub-alternative 5 - Market focus: Modify seasonal and area restrictions to increase value of harvest and/or improve the efficiency of fishing operations.

Gear Limitations (How is groundfish harvested?)

Sub-alternative 1 - Status quo. Fishing gear as described in regulations with sector allocations made in annual total allowable catch specifications.

Sub-alternative 2 - Further restrict fishing gear contact with the sea floor by banning non-pelagic trawl gear in flatfish fisheries.

Sub-alternative 3 - Restrict use of trawl, longline, and/or pot gear to habitat areas with substrates composed of unconsolidated sediments.

Sub-alternative 4 - Restrict authorized fishing gear to those capable of minimizing bycatch significantly below levels presently considered clean for each directed fishery.

Sub-alternative 5 - Allow all gear types and allow fishermen to select the most effective type.

Public Involvement

Scoping for the programmatic SEIS began with publication of a Notice of Intent in the **Federal Register** on October 1, 1999. This notice extends the scoping period from November 15, to December 15, 1999, to provide the public and NMFS with additional time to refine these alternatives.

Dated: October 27, 1999.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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