

**Finding of No Significant Impact for
Amendment 12 to the Fishery Management Plan for the
Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ Off the Coast of Alaska**

National Marine Fisheries Service

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for Amendment 12 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Salmon Fisheries in the EEZ Off the Coast of Alaska (FMP).

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrative Order 216-6 (NAO 216-6) (May 20, 1999) contains criteria for determining the significance of the impacts of a proposed action. In addition, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 CFR 1508.27 state that the significance of an action should be analyzed both in terms of “context” and “intensity.” The significance of this action is analyzed based on the NAO 216-6 criteria and CEQ’s context and intensity criteria. Each criterion listed below is relevant in making a finding of no significant impact and has been considered individually, as well as in combination with the others. These include:

1) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to jeopardize the sustainability of any target species that may be affected by the action?

Response: No. The EA analyzes the impacts of the FMP salmon fisheries and current management on salmon stocks and no significant adverse impacts on target species were identified. The proposed action would not change the management or prosecution of the FMP salmon fisheries. Therefore, no impacts on the sustainability of any target species are expected (EA Section 5.1).

2) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to jeopardize the sustainability of any non-target species?

Response: No. The EA analyzes the impacts of the FMP salmon fisheries and current management on non-target species and no significant adverse impacts were identified. The proposed action would not change the management or prosecution of the salmon fisheries in federal waters. Therefore, no impacts on the sustainability of any non-target species are expected (EA Section 4.2.3 and 4.3).

3) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to cause substantial damage to the ocean and coastal habitats and/or essential fish habitat as defined under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and identified in FMPs?

Response: No. The EA analyzes the impacts of the FMP salmon fisheries and current management on essential fish habitat and no significant adverse impacts were identified. The salmon fisheries have a minimal impact on identified essential fish habitat for salmon and on benthic habitat. The proposed action would not change the management or prosecution of the

salmon fisheries in federal waters. Therefore, no impacts on essential fish habitat are expected (EA Section 5.6).

4) Can the proposed action be reasonably expected to have a substantial adverse impact on public health or safety?

Response: No. The EA analyzes the impacts of the FMP salmon fisheries and current management on safety and no significant adverse impacts were identified. The proposed action would not change the management or prosecution of the salmon fisheries in federal waters. Therefore, no impacts on safety are expected (EA Section 4.6).

5) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to adversely affect endangered or threatened species, marine mammals, or critical habitat of these species?

Response: No. The EA analyzes the impacts of the FMP salmon fisheries and current management on endangered or threatened species, marine mammals, and critical habitat and no significant adverse impacts were identified. The proposed action would not change the management or prosecution of the salmon fisheries in federal waters. Therefore, no adverse impacts on ESA-listed species or critical habitat of these species are expected (EA Section 5.3 ESA-listed salmon, 5.4 marine mammals, and 5.5 seabirds).

6) Can the proposed action be expected to have a substantial impact on biodiversity and/or ecosystem function within the affected area (e.g., benthic productivity, predator-prey relationships, etc.)?

Response: No. Given that the proposed action would not change the management or prosecution of the FMP salmon fisheries and would have negligible impacts on individual resource components, no impacts are expected on biodiversity or ecosystem function.

7) Are significant social or economic impacts interrelated with natural or physical environmental effects?

Response: No. The EA analyzes the economic impacts of the FMP salmon fisheries and current management. Given that the proposed action would not change the management or prosecution of the salmon fisheries in federal waters, no economic impacts are expected. (EA Chapter 4)

8) Are the effects on the quality of the human environment likely to be highly controversial?

Response: No. While the action has some controversial elements, the effects of the proposed action relative to status quo are not controversial.

9) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in substantial impacts to unique areas, such as historic or cultural resources, park land, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas?

Response: No. Given that the proposed action would not change the management or prosecution of the salmon fisheries in federal waters, no impacts to unique areas, such as historic or cultural resources, park land, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas, are expected.

10) Are the effects on the human environment likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks?

Response: No. The potential effects of the action are understood because of the fish species, harvest methods involved, and area of the activity are well documented and studied. For marine mammals and seabirds, enough research has been conducted to know about the animals' abundance, distribution, and feeding behavior to determine that this action is not likely to result in population effects (EA Chapter 5).

11) Is the proposed action related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts?

Response: No. The EA analyzes the cumulative impacts and no other actions were identified that would result in cumulatively significant impacts (EA Section 5.7).

12) Is the proposed action likely to adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources?

Response: No. This action will have no effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

13) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in the introduction or spread of a nonindigenous species?

Response: No. This action poses no risk of the introduction or spread of nonindigenous species into the exclusive economic zone off Alaska because it would not change fishing, processing, or shipping practices that may lead to the introduction of nonindigenous species.

14) Is the proposed action likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration?

Response: No. This proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. While Amendment 12 would establish a comprehensively revised FMP under which future actions must comply, the nature of the changes reflects the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's long standing policy for fisheries management. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, for all future amendments to the FMP, appropriate environmental analysis documents will be prepared to inform the decision makers of potential impacts to the human environment and to implement mitigation measures to avoid significant adverse impacts.

15) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment?

Response: No. This action poses no known risk of violation of federal, state, or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

16) Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in cumulative adverse effects that could have a substantial effect on the target species or non-target species?

Response: No. The effects on target and non-target species from the alternatives are not significantly adverse as the overall harvest of these species will not be affected. No cumulative effects were identified that, added to the direct and indirect effects on target and non-target species, would result in significant effects (EA Section 5.7).

DETERMINATION

In view of the information presented in this document and the analysis contained in the supporting Environmental Assessment prepared for Amendment 12 to the FMP, it is hereby determined that Amendment 12 will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment as described above and in the supporting Environmental Assessment. In addition, all beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action have been addressed to reach the conclusion of no significant impacts. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement for this action is not necessary.

for Robert D. Mecum
James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.
Administrator, Alaska Region

6/25/12
Date