During the Council discussions of reauthorizing the provisions of amendments 18 and 23, members of the public expressed concern that continuation of those provisions might lead to continued or increased degradation of the marine environment of Unalaska Bay (Dutch Harbor, AK, area) from fish processing wastes disposed into the bay.

Although past and current disposals of fish processing wastes into Unalaska Bay have considerably degraded some local benthic environments, those disposals are controlled under permits issued and monitored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Environmental Protection Agency 1995).

Further, the amount of waste disposed into the marine environment (of Unalaska Bay and other marine areas receiving fish processing wastes) and the impacts of those disposals are unrelated to the percentages of the walleye pollock and Pacific cod harvests allocated to the inshore processing component authorized by amendments 38 and 40. Instead, they are related to the amount of fish (of all species) processed, the amount of processing waste that must be disposed of, how much of the total that will be disposed of in the marine environment, and the way it is disposed of in the marine environment. The same is true for the overboard disposal of harvest discards and fish processing wastes from vessels in the offshore component. The continuation or discontinuation of the provisions of amendments 18 and 23, per se, has no impact on the environment of Unalaska Bay or other marine disposal areas.

NMFS reviewed the EA/RIR/IRFA under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and found that the amendments would have no significant impact on the human environment.

References Cited

Environmental Protection Agency.