

North Pacific Fishery Management Council: Request for Proposals for Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs), 2010

Introduction

Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) are geographic sites that fall within the distribution of essential fish habitat¹ (EFH) for the Council's managed species, which may require additional protection from adverse effects. EFH is designated for the managed species identified in the Council's six Fishery Management Plans (BSAI and GOA groundfish, BSAI crab, Scallop, and Salmon, Arctic management area). The Council has a formalized process, identified in the FMPs, for selecting HAPCs. Under this process, the Council will periodically consider whether to set habitat priorities. This action initiates a Council call for proposals for candidate areas that meet the Council's specific priorities. The sites proposed under this process are then sent to the Council Plan Teams for scientific review, to determine whether they have ecological merit, and are also reviewed for socioeconomic and management and enforcement impacts. This combined information is presented to the SSC, the AP, and the Council, and the Council may choose to select various HAPC proposals for further analysis and implementation.

Steps in the HAPC process	Draft Timeline
Council sets HAPC priorities	April 2010
Prepare and issue call for proposals; proposal period open	April-August 16 (17 weeks)
Initial screening of proposals for adherence to priorities; Council selects proposals to go forward for review	October 2010
Socioeconomic and enforcement review of proposals by staff	October-November
Plan Teams joint meeting to review proposals for ecological merit	January 2011
Council decision on whether to formulate proposals into an amendment analysis	February 2011
Initial review of amendment analysis	April 2011
Final action on amendment analysis	June 2011

This current notice constitutes a Request for Proposals for candidate areas to be considered as HAPCs. Proposals must meet the criteria identified in the section below. All Federal, State, private, and foreign organizations or members of the public are eligible to submit proposals. **Proposals are due August 16, 2010.**

Council habitat priorities and HAPC criteria

Proposals must meet the Council's identified priority for this proposal cycle:

- **Skate nurseries**

¹ Essential fish habitat is defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act as those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity.

Additionally, the EFH guidelines [50 CFR 600.815(a)(8)] provide four considerations for identifying HAPCs:

1. The importance of the ecological function provided by the habitat.
2. The extent to which the habitat is sensitive to human-induced environmental degradation.
3. Whether, and to what extent, development activities are, or will be, stressing the habitat type.
4. The rarity of the habitat type.

The Council will consider specific sites occurring within EFH as HAPCs if they (a) meet the rarity criterion identified above, AND (b) meet at least one other of the HAPC considerations. Proposals will be reviewed against these four considerations using the Council's evaluation criteria, identified on page 3.

Proposal application procedures

All applicants should complete the application included in this package. If you need further information, please contact the Council office by phone at (907) 271-2809.

Proposals must be submitted to the Council office by mail or fax. Proposals will be accepted until **5 p.m. Alaska time on August 16, 2010**. Proposals must follow the guidelines and criteria specified in this document.

Proposal review process

Initial screening of proposals. Council staff will screen proposals to determine consistency with Council priorities, HAPC criteria, and general adequacy. Staff will present a preliminary report of the screening results to the Council. The Council will determine which of the proposals will be forwarded for the next review step: scientific, socioeconomic, and enforcement review.

Scientific review of proposals by Council Fishery Management Plan Teams. The Council will refer selected proposals to the Plan Teams, who will evaluate the proposals for ecological merit. Reviewers will rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria identified in this proposal package (page 3), recognizing that there will always be some level of scientific uncertainty in the design of proposed HAPCs and how they meet the criteria and stated goals and objectives. The review panels may highlight available science and information gaps that may have been overlooked or are not available to the submitter of the HAPC proposal.

Review of proposals for socioeconomic and management and enforcement considerations. Proposals will be reviewed by Council or agency economists for socioeconomic impact. The Magnuson-Stevens Act states that EFH measures are to minimize impacts on EFH "to the extent practicable," thus, socioeconomic considerations have to be balanced against expected ecological benefits at the earliest point in the development of measures. Management and enforcement will also provide input during the review to evaluate general management cost and enforceability of individual proposals.

Council decision on whether to proceed with proposed amendments. The Council will select which proposal or proposals will go forward for analysis for possible HAPC designation. The Council may modify the proposed HAPC sites and management measures.

Evaluation criteria for HAPC proposals

The Council has determined, through the HAPC identification process defined in the Council FMPs, that HAPCs in Alaska must be geographic sites that are rare, and must meet one of three other considerations: provide an important ecological function, be sensitive to human-induced degradation, or be stressed by development activities. In order to provide some guidance to proposers and reviewers about how proposals should be evaluated against these considerations, the following criteria have been adopted by the Council.

In order to be considered rare, proposals should meet the criteria identified in scores “2” or “3”. For the other three factors, a score of “0” indicates that a proposal does not meet the particular consideration in question.

Score	HAPC considerations			
	Rarity	Ecological Importance	Sensitivity	Level of Disturbance (applicable to activities other than fishing)
	<i>The rarity of the habitat type.</i>	<i>The importance of the ecological function provided by the habitat</i>	<i>The extent to which the habitat is sensitive to human induced environmental degradation</i>	<i>Whether and to what extent development activities are or will be stressing the habitat type</i>
0		Habitat does not provide any ecological associations ² for managed species.	Habitat resilient (not sensitive).	Habitat not subject to developmental stress.
1		Habitat provides little structure ³ or refugia. Foraging and spawning areas do not exist.	Habitat somewhat sensitive and quickly recovers; 1- 5 years. Effects considered temporary.	Habitat is or will be exposed to minimal disturbance from development.
2	Habitat uncommon, less frequent, and occurs to some extent in one or two of the Alaska regions: Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Arctic.	Habitat exhibits structure and provides refugia or substrates for spawning and foraging.	Habitat sensitive and recovery is within 10 years. Effects considered temporary, however may be more than minimal.	Habitat is or will be stressed by activities. Short term effects evident.
3	Habitat uncommon and occurs in discrete areas within only one Alaska region.	Complex habitat condition and substrate serve as refugia, concentrate prey, and/or are known to be important for spawning.	Habitat is highly sensitive and slow to recover; exceeds 10s of years. Effects will persist and more than minimal.	Habitat is or will be severely stressed or disturbed by development. Cumulative impacts require consideration from long term effects.

² Ecological associations are those associations where the habitat provides for reproductive traits (i.e. spawning and rearing aggregations) and foraging areas; areas necessary for survival of the species. Associations include habitat complexity (features, structures, etc.) and habitat associations (provide refugia, spawning substrates, concentrate prey, etc.). Ecological importance is not to be applied across all waters or substrates.

³ 'Structure' refers to three-dimensional structure.

Data Certainty Factor

The Data Certainty Factor (DCF) determines the level of information known to describe and assess the HAPC site. The DCF is used to determine if information is adequate prior to taking further action. Thus, a HAPC proposal with a high criteria score and a low DCF is to be highlighted (flagged) as a potential candidate for HAPC and for further consideration as a research priority. The DCFs are color coded according to their weight to provide a visual way of informing the criteria scores, i.e., proposal scores with a DCF of 3 are color-coded green, scores with a DCF of 2 are color-coded yellow, and scores with a DCF of 1 are color-coded red

Weight	Data Certainty
3	Site-specific habitat information is available.
2	Habitat information can be inferred or proxy conditions allow for information to be reliable.
1	Habitat information does not exist; neither by inference nor proxy.

HAPC Proposal Rank

The HAPC ranking formula provides a color-coded score (sum of criteria scores) to provide information on the proposal as it is considered by the Council in the HAPC process. A highly ranked HAPC proposal with a DCF of 3 (score color-coded green) has a high criteria score and information exists to assess the site.

HAPC Proposal Rank = Additive HAPC Criteria Score supplemented with Data Certainty Factor

Example evaluation of HAPC proposals:

HAPC Evaluation	Proposal A	Proposal B	Proposal C
Rarity	0	2	3
Ecological importance	2	1	3
Sensitivity	2	3	3
Stress / disturbance	0	0	2
Criteria Score Total (+)	4	6	11
Data Certainty Factor	3	3	1
HAPC Proposal Rank (=)	none*	6	11
Research Priority Flag			

* Proposals must meet the rarity consideration.

High scoring proposals with a low data certainty factor may warrant consideration as a research priority.

Resources available to the applicant

NMFS EFH website	Includes information on EFH regulations, EFH descriptions and identification, species profiles and habitat assessment reports, existing HAPC locations, EFH 5-year review for 2010, Final EFH EIS from 2005, links to scientific information: http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/habitat/efh.htm
North Pacific EFH and HAPC Viewer	Online EFH Mapper . Note upper left pick lists. Select North Pacific region; then select Show All HAPC or select a HAPC by area. Please note Baseline Layers Pick List (upper right side) for more features. Marine EFH delineations are also available on this site. http://sharpsfin.nmfs.noaa.gov/website/EFH_Mapper/map.aspx
AFSC skate research	http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/species/Skates.php
Gear effects on habitat	General information on the effects of particular gear types on habitat, Chapter 3.4.3 of the 2005 EFH Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/habitat/seis/final/Volume_I/Chapter_3.pdf Summary of the specific effects of Alaska fisheries on habitat (1998-2002), Appendix B.2 of the 2005 EFH EIS, http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/habitat/seis/final/Volume_II/Appendix_B.pdf Update on effects of fishing evaluation, chapter 10 of the EFH 5-year review summary report, http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/habitat/efh/review/efh_5yr_review_sumrpt_draft.pdf
Survey data	Interactive map of information from the groundfish surveys, http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/RACE/groundfish/survey_data/default.htm
Observer data	Interactive map of data from the groundfish observer program, by species (1993-2008), http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/FMA/spatial_data.htm
Economic data	Economic SAFE report, http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/docs/2009/economic.pdf Catch reports for groundfish fisheries, http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/catchstats.htm Crab and Scallop fishery information, http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/geninfo/shellfish/shelhome.php
NOAA charts	http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/OnLineViewer.html

HAPC PROPOSAL APPLICATION

All text in italics is for instruction only, and should be deleted in the final proposal.

1 Proposer information

Name:

Address:

Affiliation:

2 Proposal Summary

Title:

Summary: *Single, brief paragraph concisely describing the proposed action*

What habitat is the proposed area intended to protect?:

What FMP species is the proposed area intended to protect?:

3 Geographic delineation of the proposed HAPC

Include latitude and longitude reference points and delineation on an appropriately-scaled NOAA chart.

4 Responsiveness to HAPC considerations and Council priorities

Identify how the proposed HAPC addresses the four considerations set out in the EFH guidelines, and the Council's priority habitat type for the 2010 proposal process.

5 Purpose and objectives

Purpose and need:

Specific objectives for proposal:

Methods to measure progress toward those objectives:

6 Proposed management measures, if appropriate

Proposed management measures to meet objectives:

7 Effects

Expected benefits of the proposed HAPC to FMP species:

Identification of fisheries, sectors, stakeholders, and communities who would be affected by the establishment of the proposed HAPC:

8 Supporting information

Please provide the best available information and/or sources of information to support the objectives of the proposed HAPC and discussion of the expected effects of implementing the proposal, including socioeconomic costs if possible.