

APPENDIX A: Essential Fishing Habitat Consultation and Concurrence




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Region
501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200
Long Beach, California 90802-4213

JAN - 9 2013 150413SWR2012SF01943:TLW

MEMORANDUM FOR: Steve Edmondson
Assistant Regional Administrator
For Habitat Conservation

FROM: Mark Helvey 
Assistant Regional Administrator
For Sustainable Fisheries

SUBJECT: Essential Fish Habitat Assessment; Effects of a Proposed Study
on the Use of Light-Touch California Halibut Trawl Gear
within Historic Monterey Bay Trawl Grounds

This memo initiates an Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation with respect to a proposed study on the use of light-touch California halibut (*Paralichthys californicus*) trawl gear within historic Monterey Bay trawl grounds now closed to trawling. This survey is in many ways comparable to the fishery-independent surveys for California halibut (halibut) performed in 2007 and 2010 by California Department of Fish and Game, Marine Region (CDFG). The research study will examine the effects of light-touch trawl gear using a video camera mounted on the head rope of the trawl. The footage from the camera will help to determine the extent of impacts, if any, there are to the seafloor. It will also compare catch composition, obtain an additional set of relative abundance and length frequency data used in stock assessment, track migration and movements of halibut using Floy dart tags, and provide data on benefits of an ad-hoc Marine Protected Area due to closure of trawl in 2006. The newly acquired data will add an additional index of biomass for future stock assessments of halibut. This research is a partnership between the CDFG and the National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Region, Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD). The proposed action will take place within the boundaries of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS). The MBNMS requires issuance of a permit in order for the CDFG and SFD to conduct the survey within its waters. This is not anticipated to be controversial.

The area affected by the proposed light-touch trawl survey would occur within Monterey Bay along the same trawl lines used by CDFG in August 2010 for a fishery-independent halibut trawl survey (Attachment 1). A total of 20 daylight tows, each of 30-minute duration, would be completed in during a four or five day period. Specifically, the proposed survey will take place at depths from approximately 10 fathoms to 35 fathoms on sandy, soft-bottom between approximately 36° 56' North latitude to 36° 48' North latitude. This short-term study will take place in July or August 2013 (specific dates to be determined), aboard the F/V *Cecelia*.

There may be minor adverse effects to EFH from trawling on the seafloor but the proposed survey will use light-touch trawl gear as opposed to traditional trawl gear. Traditional trawl gear has heavier doors, larger nets and smaller mesh size in the cod end compared to light-touch trawl gear (Attachment 2). Light-touch trawl gear webbing is thought to float and not drag on the

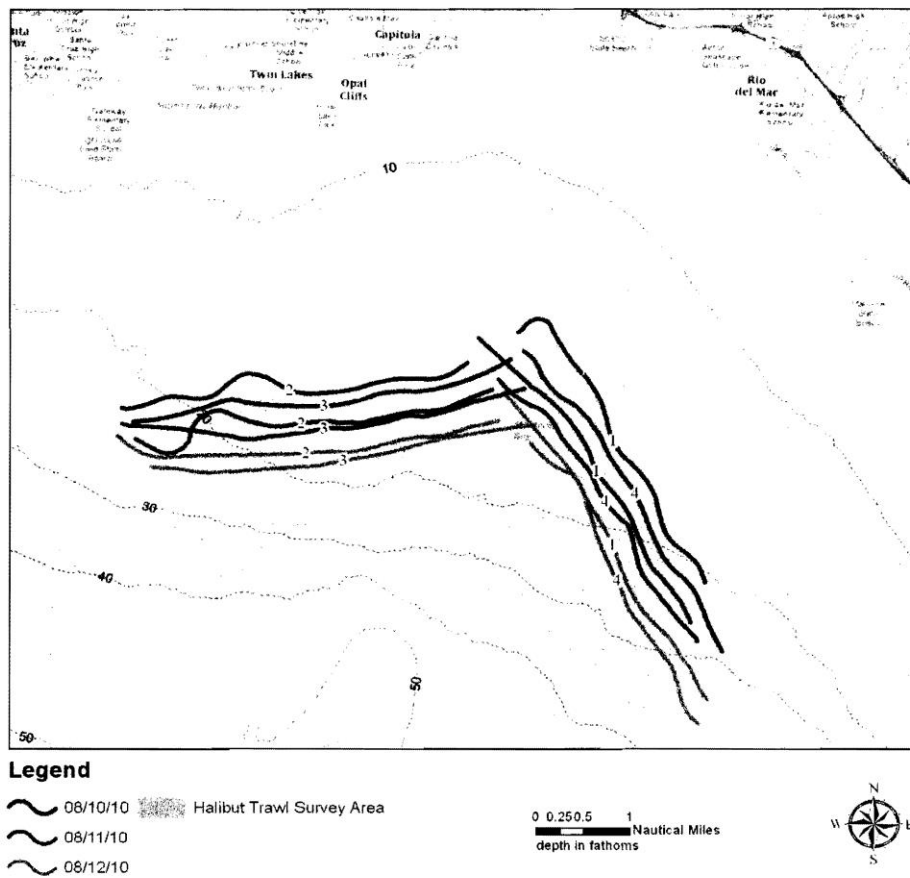


seafloor minimizing the footprint on the bottom. Further, the proposed study will be trawling on sand bottom therefore the impacts may be considered negligible in terms of impact.

Due to the limited scope and duration of the project SFD considers the effect of the proposed light-touch trawl survey to be negligible in terms of the impact on the quality and quantity of EFH. Therefore, I recommended that performing this proposed survey should have no adverse impact on any areas identified as EFH for Federally managed species, and should not have an adverse impact on EFH within Monterey Bay. Proposed mitigation measures are not applicable to this study.

Attachments

Attachment 1. California halibut trawl survey tow tracks for 2010 California Department of Fish and Game fishery-independent trawl survey in north Monterey Bay.



Attachment 2. Comparison of Net Sizes for 4 different types of nets used on the U.S. Pacific coast by material, weight of net, wing length and door size. (Taken from a presentation by McCorkle, M. 2012. Light-Touch Trawl--Easy On the Seafloor. Presented to Southern California Academy of Science Innovations in Sustainable Fisheries Session, Occidental University, May 4, 2012. Los Angeles, CA.)

Comparison of Net Sizes	
<p><u>Light-Touch Paranzella</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floating polypro webbing, 2.5 mm • Net & cod end weigh ~ 200 lbs • Wing length 40-80 feet • Doors 250-400 lbs 	<p><u>Pacific Trawl Halibut Net</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floating Polypro webbing • Net & cod End 330 lbs • Wing Length 32 ft • Doors 500 lbs



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February 5, 2013

In response, refer to:
SWR/F/SWR1:EC

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mark Helvey
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Sustainable Fisheries

FROM: Steve Edmondson
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Habitat Conservation

SUBJECT: Essential Fish Habitat Consultation, Effects of a Proposed Study
on the Use of Light-Touch California Halibut Trawl Gear within
Historic Monterey Bay Trawl Grounds

This memorandum is in response to your January 9, 2013, request for an essential fish habitat (EFH) consultation regarding the proposed study on the use of light-touch California halibut (*Paralichthys californicus*) trawl gear within historic trawl grounds in Monterey Bay now closed to trawling. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Southwest Region, Sustainable Fisheries Division is partnering with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), formerly California Department of Fish and Game, Marine Region, to evaluate the effects of light-touch trawl gear using video equipment mounted on the trawl head rope. The footage collected from the camera will be used to: 1) determine the extent of impacts to the seafloor, if any; 2) compare catch composition; 3) obtain an additional set of relative abundance and length frequency data used in the stock assessment; 4) track migration and movements of halibut using Floy dart tags; and 5) provide data on benefits of an ad-hoc Marine Protected Area due to closure to trawl gear in 2006.

The proposed action would occur within the boundaries of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, along the same trawl lines used by CDFW in August 2010 for a fishery-independent halibut trawl survey. There would be a total of 20 tows, each of 30-minute duration, completed over a four or five day period in July or August 2013. The study will be conducted at depths ranging from approximately 10 fathoms to 35 fathoms on sandy, soft-bottom habitat.

The proposed action is within EFH for various federally managed fish species within the Pacific Coast Groundfish, Pacific Coast Salmon, and Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). NMFS' Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) believes the proposed action would adversely affect EFH for managed species within those FMPs due to impacts associated with trawling on the seafloor. However, light-touch trawl gear will be used instead of traditional



trawl gear, which has heavier doors, larger nets, and a smaller mesh size in the cod end. The light touch trawl gear is also expected to float, not drag, along the seafloor thereby minimizing impacts. In addition, the study will be conducted over sandy substrate away from sensitive habitats and will be of limited scope and duration. Therefore, NMFS' HCD believes that any adverse impacts associated with the proposed study will be no more than minimal and temporary in nature and has no additional EFH Conservation Recommendations to provide at this time.