

## NOAA FISHERIES

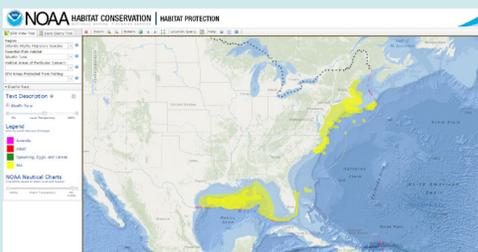
### *Did You Know?*

Essential Fish Habitat conservation supports sustainable fisheries nationwide.

In 2012, U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries

- ◆ 1.7 million jobs
- ◆ \$199 billion in economic activity

### *Where Can I Find Essential Fish Habitat?*



Use our EFH Mapper to find maps and information about EFH and HAPCs

[www.habitat.noaa.gov/efhmapper](http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/efhmapper)

## Protecting Essential Fish Habitat

Fish require healthy surroundings to survive and reproduce. Essential fish habitat (EFH) includes all types of aquatic habitat—like wetlands, coral reefs, seagrasses, rocky reefs, and rivers—where fish spawn, breed, feed, or grow to adulthood.

NOAA Fisheries works with the regional fishery management councils (Councils) to identify EFH for federally managed species at each stage of their life cycle and to minimize the effects from fishing on EFH. The Councils may identify Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) that are considered high priority for conservation, management, or research because they are rare, sensitive, stressed by development, or important to having healthy ecosystems. In these areas, activities will be more carefully scrutinized and may require extra study and mitigation planning.



Impacts from certain fishing practices and coastal and marine development may adversely affect EFH. Through EFH consultations, NOAA Fisheries works with federal agencies on ways they can avoid or minimize the adverse effects of their actions on the habitat of federally managed commercial and recreational fisheries.

EFH consultations reduce environmental impacts to thousands of acres of coastal habitat annually across the Nation for federal actions influencing these areas. EFH consultations play a critical role in ensuring that federal agencies do everything reasonable to protect and restore healthy coastal habitats for fisheries.

For more information on essential fish habitat and regulatory guidelines visit: <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/protection/efh/index.html>



### EFH consultation steps:

1. The agency provides notification of the action to NOAA Fisheries.



2. The agency submits an EFH Assessment to NOAA Fisheries.



3. NOAA Fisheries reviews the EFH Assessment.



4. NOAA Fisheries provides EFH Conservation Recommendations to the agency, if necessary.



5. The agency responds to NOAA Fisheries on how it plans to proceed.

### Additional Information

Find more information on developing EFH Assessments, the consultation process, streamlining mechanisms, and a list of NOAA Fisheries regional contacts that can provide the latest local EFH information at: <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/protection/efh/consultations.html>

## What Triggers an Essential Fish Habitat Consultation?

When a federal agency authorizes, funds, or undertakes an action that may adversely affect EFH, they must consult with NOAA Fisheries on that action. NOAA Fisheries provides advice and recommendations to the federal agency to avoid, reduce, or compensate for these adverse effects.

## What is an “Adverse Effect”?

An adverse effect to EFH is any direct or indirect effect that reduces the quality and/or quantity of the habitat. Examples range from large-scale ocean uses to small-scale projects along the coast.

### Examples of Projects that Might Cause Adverse Effects

Offshore energy development	Wastewater discharges
Coastal development projects	Port and navigation projects
In-water structure placement and maintenance	Shore stabilization

## What is The Consultation Process?

Federal agencies should contact NOAA Fisheries early on in the project planning stages. Early coordination will allow us to provide technical assistance, guidance and recommendations on actions, can help the consultation proceed more efficiently, or eliminate the need for a consultation.

For any action that may adversely affect EFH, a federal agency must submit an [EFH Assessment](#) to NOAA Fisheries to assess the potential effects of their action, and a written request for an EFH consultation. If it is determined that the action would adversely affect EFH, then consultation is initiated.

After reviewing the EFH Assessment, NOAA Fisheries will provide any necessary EFH Conservation Recommendations on measures that the federal agency can take to conserve EFH. Federal agencies must respond in writing describing measures they will implement to conserve EFH, or explain why they will not be adopting the EFH Conservation Recommendations.

## Streamlining the Review

Consultations are typically combined with existing environmental review procedures, such as those under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Federal Power Act, to streamline the requirements and avoid duplication with other environmental reviews. Federal agencies may also consult on a group of similar activities through a programmatic consultation.