

CHANGES TO TRAWL CATCH SHARE PROGRAM GEAR REGULATIONS –
FINAL ACTION

The trawl rationalization program (trawl catch shares), implemented at the start of 2011, provided for 100 percent at-sea monitoring and individual vessel accountability for catch of many groundfish species. For those species, trip limit regulations were no longer needed and were therefore eliminated. Full at-sea monitoring and individual accountability may also have rendered other regulations obsolete, but they were not modified or eliminated at that time. Late in 2011, the Council convened a Trawl Rationalization Regulatory Evaluation Committee to identify other regulations that might be liberalized or eliminated ([Agenda Item E.7.b, Supplemental TRREC Report, November 2011](#)). The following year, the Council convened a workshop to continue that effort with a particular focus on regulations pertaining to gear configuration and use for vessels participating in the catch share program ([Agenda Item I.5.a, Attachment 4 – Gear Workshop Report, November 2012](#)). Until late 2014, further progress on these issues was delayed to handle other workload priorities. At that time, as part of its omnibus agenda item on groundfish priorities, the Council prioritized for consideration several changes to groundfish regulations, including trawl gear configuration and gear use.

At its September 2015 meeting, the Council selected a range of gear issues and alternatives for analysis in the current package but specified that analysts should not take up issues that would impede achieving implementation for 2017. On that basis, a number of issues were excluded, as reported to the Council at its November 2015 meeting ([Agenda Item F.6, Attachment 5, November 2015](#)). Issues which were excluded have been put on the list for the next omnibus prioritization process scheduled to begin this June (identified as “Trawl Gear Regs Update II” in the groundfish workload planner—Agenda Item I.3, Attachment 3).

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to select a final preferred alternative (FPA) for gear regulations. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has developed a preliminary draft environmental impact statement (EIS), excerpts of which are provided as Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 1 (the EIS in its entirety is available on the Council website—electronic only). The EIS covers a suite of eight gear issues, as follows: (1) minimum mesh sizes, (2) measuring mesh size, (3) codend regulations, (4) selective flatfish trawl, (5) chafing gear, (6) multiple gears on board, (7) fishing in multiple management areas, and (8) fishing before previous catch is stowed. Chapter 1 of the EIS includes the purpose and need statement adopted by the Council at its September 2015 meeting (Section 1.3); Chapter 2 provides the alternatives for each of the eight issues; and Chapter 4 provides the main impact analysis. Subsections of Chapters 2 and 4 are organized by issue to allow the reader to locate with relative ease all the related materials on a particular issue. Federal gear regulations, current as of August 15, 2015, are provided as Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 2. NMFS has provided a report (Agenda Item G.8.a, NMFS Report) that explains why the gear issues warrant an EIS, requests Council permission to revise the purpose and need statement, identifies elements of the analysis still in development, provides NMFS comments on making the FPA decision and selected alternatives, provides an estimated schedule for action, and identifies sections of the FMP which may need to be updated.

Council Action:

1. Consider authorizing revisions to the purpose and need statement.
2. Adopt final preferred alternatives for changing gear regulations for the trawl catch shares sector.
3. Provide additional guidance, as necessary.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 1: Gear Changes for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery's Trawl Catch Share Program, Preliminary Draft EIS (Excerpts – Full Version Electronic Only).
2. Agenda Item G.8, Attachment 2: Regulations Related To Trawl Gear Configuration, Gears Allowed On Board, and Area of Use.
3. Agenda Item G.8.a, NMFS Report: Groundfish Gear Changes—Issues for Consideration, Trawl Gear Configuration and Use.

Agenda Order:

- G.8 Changes to Trawl Catch Share Program Gear Regulations - Final Action Jim Seger
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Preferred Alternatives for Gear Change Regulations Applying to Vessels in the Trawl Catch Share Program, as Appropriate, and Provide Additional Guidance as Necessary

PFMC
2/11/2016