

FINAL ACTION ON TRAWL CATCH SHARE PROGRAM GEAR USE REGULATIONS FOR FISHING IN MULTIPLE MANAGEMENT AREAS

At its March 2016 meeting, the Council recommended that trawl gear regulations be updated to reflect the individual accountability provided by the trawl catch share program but deferred action on fishing in multiple management areas on the same trip until this meeting. Specifically, the Council recommended: allowing vessels to carry and use multiple trawl gears types on a single trip (fish caught using different gears must be stowed separately); eliminating minimum mesh size regulations for the codend and body of the net; eliminating restrictions on codends; eliminating chafing gear restrictions; allowing a new haul to be brought onboard and dumped before all catch from previous haul has been stowed; and changing the selective flatfish trawl gear definition and restrictions. The selective flatfish trawl gear definition would be changed to allow the use of four seams nets and the restriction that requires use of selective flatfish trawl gear shoreward of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) in the area north of 40° 10' N. latitude would be replaced by a restriction that requires use of small footrope trawl in that area. The Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) contains descriptive language that relates to the gear change recommendations made at the March 2016 meeting. As a housekeeping measure that language will be updated, as displayed in Agenda Item G.9.a, Attachment 1. Since this is a housekeeping matter based on prior Council action, the material in Attachment 1 is provided as an opportunity for the Council to affirm that the language comports with that action.

The Council final recommendation on minimum mesh size was the elimination of all minimum mesh size requirements. The focus of discussion and analysis for this issue was on the meshes in the body of the net and codend. There is another minimum mesh size requirement that is integral to the definition of midwater trawl gear:

660.130(b)(4) Midwater (pelagic or off-bottom) trawl gear. Midwater trawl gear must have unprotected footropes.... For at least 20 ft (6.15 m) immediately behind the footrope or headrope, bare ropes or mesh of 16-inch (40.6-cm) minimum mesh size must completely encircle the net.

The requirements for use of unprotected footrope and ropes or 16-inch mesh in the front of the net is intended to make the use of midwater trawl gear impractical or ineffective for fishing on the bottom. Based on the scope of the discussion and analysis of the minimum mesh size requirement, Council staff is interpreting the Council final action as not altering the 16-inch mesh size requirement for midwater trawl gear.

Analysis of the issue of allowing individual fishing quota (IFQ) vessels to fish in multiple management areas on the same trip is provide in Agenda Item G.9, Attachment 2 (excerpts from the March 2016 gear environmental impact statement [EIS]). Agenda Item G.9.a, NMFS Report, provides the range of alternatives, taking into account the Groundfish Advisory Panel recommendation from the March Council meeting. The management lines and species impacted by this decision are as follows (for all other IFQ species, there are no management line divisions in the annual catch limits).

Management Line	IFQ Species/Species Groups
North/South of 40° 10' N. Lat.	Bocaccio, Cowcod, Chilipepper, Lingcod, Splitnose, Yellowtail, Minor Shelf Rockfish, Minor Slope Rockfish, Blackgill (starting in 2018)
North/South of 36° 0' N. Lat.	Sablefish
North/South of 34° 27' N. Lat.	Longspine Thornyhead, Shortspine Thornyhead

Council Action:

1. **Affirm housekeeping language for FMP amendment.**
2. **Adopt final preferred alternatives for fishing in multiple management areas and provide other guidance as necessary.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.9, Attachment 1: Gear Related Housekeeping Changes to Language in the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP).
2. Agenda Item G.9, Attachment 2: Excerpts From Chapter 4 on Fishing in Multiple Management Areas, Gear Changes for the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery's Trawl Catch Share Program, Preliminary Draft EIS.
3. Agenda Item G.9.a, NMFS Report: Options for Discussion on Fishing in Multiple IFQ Management Areas.

Agenda Order:

- G.9 Final Action on Trawl Catch Share Program Gear Use Regulations
for Fishing in Multiple Management Areas
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Preferred Alternatives for Fishing in Multiple Management Areas

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