

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT FOR 2023-2024 GROUND FISH BIENNIAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES

At the April 2022 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) submitted a report ([Agenda Item F.4.a Supplemental NMFS Report 1](#)) containing a second set of proposed revisions to the Council's November 2021 motion on Action Item 12e, which would provide limited fishing access to the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (NT-RCA) as a management measure in the 2023-24 Groundfish Harvest Specifications and Management Measures action.

The Council's Enforcement Committee (EC), members of the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP), and the Emley-Platt and Real Good Fish Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) directors provided additional feedback on the proposed specifications for the new gear configurations that would be allowed for use inside the NT-RCA. In response to this feedback, NMFS provides a revised proposal for Action Item 12e:

Proposed Revision for Action Item 12e in the November 2021 Motion: Version 3

Allow vessels in the directed open access fishery targeting groundfish to operate inside the NT-RCA from 46° 16' N. latitude to the U.S./Mexico border with non-bottom contact hook-and-line gear only, subject to the specifications below. Prohibited bottom contact hook-and-line gears would include bottom longline, commercial vertical hook-and-line gear (anchored to the bottom), and dinglebar gear. Vessels must declare their intent to fish within the NT-RCA and their gear type prior to departure. Vessels may fish inside and outside of the non-trawl RCA on the same trip but may only carry one type of legal non-bottom contact hook-and-line gear on-board the vessel when fishing occurs in the NT-RCA.

New gear definition

Legal non-bottom contact hook-and-line gear means stationary vertical jig gear attached to the vessel and not anchored to the bottom, and groundfish troll gear. The following requirements apply to stationary vertical jig gear: 1) must be a minimum of 50 feet between the bottom weight and the lowest fishing hook; 2) no more than 4 vertical mainlines may be used at one time with no more than 25 hooks on each mainline, and; 3) no more than 100 hooks may be in the water at one time, with no more than 25 extra hooks on board the vessel.

Groundfish troll gear includes a horizontally-suspended monofilament mainline attached to a troll wire. The following requirements apply to groundfish troll gear: 1) must be a minimum of 50 feet between the bottom weight and the troll wire's connection to the horizontal mainline; 2) no more than 1 mainline may be used at one time, and 3) no more than 500 hooks may be in the water at one time, with no more than 25 extra hooks on board the vessel; hooks must be spaced

apart by a visible marker (e.g., floats, line wraps, colored lines splices), with no more than 25 hooks between each marker and no more than 20 markers on the mainline.

Both stationary vertical jig gear and groundfish troll gear may be equipped with artificial lures and flies. Natural bait or weighted hooks may not be used nor be on board the vessel during the trip.

New sector definition within the definition for open access fishery¹

Directed open access means that a fishing vessel is target fishing for groundfish under the requirements of 50 CFR 660 Subpart F, is only declared into an open access groundfish gear type or sector as defined at 50 CFR 660.13(d)(4)(iv)(A), and has not declared into any other gear type or sector.

Summary of Revisions

First, based on feedback from the EC, NMFS revised the minimum depth requirement for both gear types to be the distance between the bottom weight and the lowest fishing hook instead of the overall depth off the bottom. The purpose of this modification is to provide enforcement officers a physical measurement to take during boardings that would ensure fishing depth was at least 50 feet off the bottom. Second, based on feedback from the GAP and both EFP Directors, NMFS modified the maximum hook requirement to allow an additional 25 hooks to be carried on board the vessel to replace lost or broken hooks. Last, based on feedback from the Real Good Fish EFP Director, NMFS clarified that hooks on the troll gear configuration are required to be separated by a visible marker as opposed to floats specifically. The purpose of this change is to provide flexibility in the markers used to separate hooks, as floats may cause gear entanglement during deployment.

¹ This definition would also apply to vessels that would be subject to the federal non-trawl logbook requirement.