



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Pete Hassemer, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

Agenda Item H.2
Attachment 4
September 2025

September XX, 2025

Mr. Eugenio Piñeiro Soler
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

DRAFT

Dear Mr. Soler,

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) met June 11-16, 2025 and September 17-24, 2025 and discussed Executive Order 14276, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, with a focus on developing a prioritized list of recommended actions to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and to increase production of sustainable fisheries. The Pacific Council's recommended actions are intended to stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures, consistent with EO 14276 and building upon EO 13921, Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth. Attachment A contains descriptions of upcoming proposed regulatory amendments, Fishery Management Plan (FMP) amendments, and exempted fishing permit actions that uniquely align with the EO 14276 workplan requirement. In order to achieve these proposed actions, the Pacific Council anticipates that NMFS support will be necessary through our practice of developing, analyzing, and recommending actions via our effective, transparent, public process provided for under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Summary of Pacific Council Actions in Response to Executive Order 14276

As shown in Attachment A, the Pacific Council intends to undertake several actions that respond directly to the EO. These actions encompass the management of sardine fisheries, groundfish fisheries, fisheries for highly migratory species, and Pacific halibut fisheries. As noted in the attachment, the Pacific Council plans to utilize a variety of approaches that will enhance flexibility, reduce the occurrence of fishery closures, and advance new innovative fishing methods to access underutilized stocks. These plans call for action taken by the Pacific Council in 2025 and 2026, and implementation by NMFS in 2026, 2027, and potentially 2028.

Summary of Other Initiatives Consistent with the Intent of Executive Order 14276

The Pacific Council has experienced firsthand the challenges of declining landings, reduced recreational opportunities, and the loss of working waterfronts. These conditions—marked by both persistent challenges and pockets of resilience—have long guided the Council's priorities, in ways

that are fully consistent with the goals and objectives of the EO. In addition to the initiatives listed in Attachment A, the Pacific Council has begun several efforts that further align with the EO objectives. Because the scope of these actions are under development, it is not yet possible to project dates for final Pacific Council action or NMFS implementation. Accordingly, these initiatives are not reflected in Attachment A but are summarized below. The Pacific Council will provide NMFS with regular updates on our progress towards these initiatives.

- The Pacific Council places high value on the scientific activities—such as observing, monitoring, stock assessments, and surveys—needed to support fishery management off the U.S. West Coast. The Pacific Council is reviewing its stock assessment process, with an emphasis on groundfish, to evaluate transparency, trust, scientific rigor, and stakeholder engagement. The outcome is expected to include recommendations that enhance trust, reinforce the use of best available science, and ensure the process remains effective within resource constraints. The Pacific Council supports continued development of Science Center products, such as California Current Ecosystem Status Report, to help the Pacific Council understand trends in environmental, biological, economic and social indicators necessary to support sustainable fishery management. Innovations such as risk tables provide the Pacific Council with onramps for incorporating such information into harvest specifications. The Pacific Council has also worked closely with the Southwest Fisheries Science Center and West Coast Region to identify science and management priorities necessary to support Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) management, which are summarized on our [website](#). As noted in Attachment A, the Pacific Council’s first CPS priority is to define all sardine stocks in need of conservation and management off the West Coast of the U.S. and revise the associated reference points, if appropriate. After that work is complete, the Pacific Council will identify the next priority and proceed accordingly.
- Successful fishery management also relies on services provided by the West Coast Region including policy analysis, regulation writing, and permitting. To fully achieve the EO objectives, NMFS must also act on regulatory measures already submitted by the Pacific Council. For example, fixed gear marking requirements and entanglement risk reduction measures for the groundfish fishery, transmitted on December 20, 2024, respond to a Term and Condition of the ESA Section 7(a)(2) Biological Opinion. Without gear-specific markings, ESA-listed species interactions may be misattributed to the groundfish fishery, potentially triggering unnecessary closures.
- The Pacific Council intends to submit recommendations this fall to remove gear endorsements for the limited entry fixed gear sector to provide additional flexibility for the sector; however, this action is predicated on the gear marking and entanglement risk reduction measures mentioned above. Similarly, Pacific Council recommendations to repeal the Cordell Bank Groundfish Conservation Area closure and expand fishing opportunity, transmitted on June 13, 2025, remains under review. Clearing this backlog will enable NOAA Fisheries and the Pacific Council to enhance fishing access, reduce closure risks, and strengthen the competitiveness of U.S. seafood.
- NMFS and Pacific Council coordination on international treaties is necessary to facilitate Pacific whiting, highly migratory species (HMS), CPS, and Pacific halibut fisheries off the

U.S. West Coast. Domestically, the Pacific Council manages four FMPs under the authority of the MSA, using annual or biennial cycles paired with inseason adjustments to improve access, enhance economic returns, and prevent closures. The Pacific Council is interested in collaborating with the West Coast Region and the Southwest Fisheries Science Center to explore and evaluate solutions to the current catch accounting regime for Pacific sardine. All landings are presently assumed to be from the “northern subpopulation” (as defined in the FMP) inseason, despite most landings coming from the supposed southern subpopulation—a practice that can trigger premature closures. While a change to catch accounting procedures would not require a regulatory amendment, it is a high priority and consistent with the intent of the EO. The Pacific Council also regularly reviews and recommends EFPs to support data collection, expand fishing opportunities, and develop new markets. Attachment A includes an action to establish HMS EFP metrics to streamline issuance, a priority given the upcoming 2027 prohibition on large mesh drift gillnets under the Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act. Additional CPS and Groundfish EFP recommendations are anticipated in April and June 2026, respectively. Finally, under the Pacific Halibut Act, the Pacific Council annually reviews and revises the Catch Sharing Plan and related regulations to maximize both commercial and recreational harvest.

- The Pacific Council continues to review and provide comments on marine planning activities, including offshore wind energy, aquaculture, and other ocean uses. Such engagement directly supports the objectives of the EO by ensuring that new ocean development is compatible with sustainable fisheries, fish habitat protection, and the long-term competitiveness of U.S. seafood.
- Beginning in 2023, the Pacific Council began undertaking actions intended to increase operational efficiency, reduce costs, enhance public participation, and strengthen decision-making processes. The Pacific Council is also identifying management innovations that allow for more timely and efficient responses to a changing environment.

The Pacific Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on these regulatory reform efforts and looks forward to continuing cooperative efforts with NMFS to maintain efficient and effective West Coast fishery regulations that support the fishing industry. Should you or your staff have any questions or require further assistance, please feel free to contact me, or our Executive Director, Mr. Merrick Burden.

Sincerely,

Pete Hassemer
Chairman

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Enclosure: Attachment A
Cc: Council Members