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NMFS Streamlines Restrictions on Groundfish Bottom and Midwater Trawl Gear Used in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery

EFFECTIVE: JANUARY 1, 2019

Due to the successes of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery's Trawl Rationalization Program, and the improved status of a number of overfished stocks, NMFS streamlined regulations for vessels fishing with groundfish bottom and midwater trawl gear. The final rule which revises and eliminates restrictions on groundfish bottom and midwater trawl gear used in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery's Trawl Rationalization Program published on December 3, 2018 and can be found [here](#).

Regulations contained in this rule are effective **January 1, 2019**. The following information explains which requirements and prohibitions are changing for groundfish bottom and midwater trawl vessels fishing under the Trawl Rationalization Program and is followed by questions and clarifications.

For more information, please contact the Groundfish Branch at (206) 526-6150

What's Changing January 1, 2019

| | Old Requirement/Prohibition | New Requirement |
|--|---|--|
| Minimum Mesh Size | <p>Groundfish bottom trawl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.5 inches <p>Midwater trawl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.0 inches • First 20 feet behind footrope or headrope must have bare ropes with 16 inches minimum mesh | <p>Groundfish bottom trawl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mesh size restrictions <p>Midwater trawl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mesh size restrictions except for the first 20 feet behind footrope or headrope must have bare ropes with 16 inches minimum mesh |
| Measuring Mesh Size | Distance between opposing knots | Distance between opposing knots or corners in knotless webbing |
| Codend | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codends must be single-walled • Chafing gear cannot be used to create a double-walled codend | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codends may be single-wall or double-wall codends • Chafing gear can be used to create the double-walled codend |
| Chafing Gear | <p>Groundfish bottom trawl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chafing gear could encircle no more than 50 percent of the net's circumference and may be used only on the last 50 meshes <p>Midwater trawl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chafing gear could cover the bottom and sides of the codend; • chafing gear is not permitted on the top codend panel, except for the band of mesh that may encircle the net under restraining straps and other trawl components, but must be no wider than 16 in. | <p>Groundfish bottom trawl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No restrictions on the use and configuration of chafing gear <p>Midwater trawl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No restrictions on the use and configuration of chafing gear |
| Selective Flatfish Trawl (SFFT) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFFT gear must be a two-seamed net. • SFFT is required shoreward of the trawl rockfish conservation area (RCA) north of 40°10' N. lat. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFFT gear may be a two- or four-seamed net. • SFFT is required shoreward of the trawl RCA between 40°10' N. lat. and 42° N. lat. and in the Klamath and Columbia River Salmon Conservation Zones. • SFFT is not required shoreward of the trawl RCA and north of 42° N. lat. but may be used in this area. |

What's Changing January 1, 2019

| | Old Requirement/Prohibition | New Requirement |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Multiple Gears Onboard (Applies to trawl vessels fishing in the Shorebased IFQ Program only)</p> | <p>North of 40°10 N. lat.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vessels may not have both groundfish trawl gear and non-groundfish trawl gear, nor both bottom trawl gear and midwater trawl gear; Vessels may have more than one type of limited entry bottom-trawl gear <p>South of 40°10 N. lat.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vessels may not have both groundfish trawl gear and non-groundfish trawl gear, nor both bottom trawl gear and midwater trawl gear, nor both small footrope trawl gear and any other type of bottom trawl gear Vessels must return to port to make declarations Vessels may not have both groundfish trawl gear and non-groundfish trawl gear on board simultaneously. | <p>Vessels may have any type of groundfish bottom trawl (small or large footrope) or midwater trawl gear onboard simultaneously or successively on the same trip except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 42° N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat. and shoreward of the trawl RCA, vessels may have SFFT, midwater trawl, and large footrope trawl gear on board simultaneously or successively on the same trip. Vessels are prohibited from carry any other type of small footrope trawl gear in this area. Vessels may only declare one type of trawl gear at a time Vessels may fish with both groundfish bottom trawl gear and midwater trawl gear on the same fishing trip as long as a new declaration is made before fishing with a new gear Vessels may make declarations from sea and do not have to return to port to do so as long as the new declaration is made before fishing with a new gear Vessels must keep and land catch from different gears separate by gear type |
| <p>Landing Successive Hauls (Applies to trawl vessels fishing in the Shorebased IFQ Program only)</p> | <p>Entire haul must be stowed before next haul can be landed on the deck</p> | <p>Vessels may bring a new haul on board before the previous haul has been stowed, but catch from hauls cannot mix until the observer has had an opportunity to complete the required sampling protocols and all protocols in the specific Vessel's Monitoring Plan have been followed. Mixing of sampled and non-sampled hauls could result in issues with catch accounting. NMFS recommends cleaning the decks of catch from previous hauls before dumping of subsequent hauls to avoid this.</p> |

What's Changing January 1, 2019

| | Old Requirement/Prohibition | New Requirement |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Fishing in Multiple IFQ Management Areas (Applies to trawl vessels fishing in the Shorebased IFQ Program only)</p> | <p>Vessels are not allowed to fish in more than one individual fishing quota (IFQ) management area on the same fishing trip.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vessels may fish in multiple IFQ management areas on a single trip • Vessels may record catch from multiple areas on the same fish ticket • Vessels may cross management lines on a single tow. • Vessels must record the number of tows in a management area. Catch will be prorated based on the ratio of tows. |

Below are some examples for how catch will be apportioned for trawl vessels fishing in multiple IFQ management areas:

Example 1: Vessel retains 100 pounds of sablefish on a trip with 3 hauls in area 200 and 7 hauls in area 300. Vessel is debited 30 pounds of Sablefish N and 70 pounds of Sablefish S.

Example 2: Vessel retains 100 pounds of sablefish on a trip with 3 hauls in area 200 and 6 hauls in area 300 and one haul that crosses between areas 200 and 300. Vessel is debited 35 pounds of Sablefish N and 65 pounds of Sablefish S.

Example 3: Vessel retains 50 pounds of chillipepper rockfish with bottom trawl gear and 50 pounds of yellowtail rockfish with midwater gear. Vessel reports that they had one bottom trawl tow in area 100, one bottom trawl tow in area 200, and two midwater hauls in area 100. Vessel is debited 25 lbs Chilipepper S of 40°10' N. lat., and 50 lbs of Yellowtail N of 40°10' N. lat.

Example 4: Vessel discards 50 lbs of minor shelf rockfish over several hauls in area 100; 100 lbs of minor shelf rockfish on a haul in area 200; and 10 lbs of minor shelf rockfish on a haul crossing from area 100 to 200. They are debited 55 lbs of Minor Shelf Rockfish N of 40°10' N. lat. and 105 lbs of Minor Shelf Rockfish S of 40°10' N. lat.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which gears can I carry on board and where?

- Vessels may not have both groundfish trawl gear and non-groundfish trawl gear on board simultaneously or successively on the same trip
- Vessels may not have both trawl gear and non-trawl gear (fixed gear) on board simultaneously or successively on the same trip
- Trawl vessels fishing in the Shorebased IFQ Program only are allowed to carry and use multiple groundfish trawl gear types (bottom or midwater trawl gear) on board simultaneously with the following exception:
 - Between 42° N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat. and shoreward of the trawl RCA only, a vessel may have more than one type of midwater trawl gear, large footrope gear, or SFFT. Vessels are prohibited from having any other type of small footrope trawl gear other than SFFT on board.

When do I need to make a new declaration? Do I need to return to Port to make it?

Vessels will need to make a declaration before their first trip and then any time they switch gears between groundfish bottom and midwater trawl gear. Declarations are made by calling the declaration line (1-888-585-5518). When calling please provide your vessel identification number, five digit vessel pass code, and three digit gear code. Then record the confirmation before disconnecting from the line.

When can I bring another haul on board the vessel?

Under the new requirements, vessels will be allowed to bring a new haul on board and allow it to mix with catch from other hauls only after all required sampling and monitoring procedures have been carried out according to the Vessel's monitoring plan. For vessels carrying observers, observers must still be provided the time and space to complete all their required sampling protocols. When the observer notifies the vessel operator that protocols are complete, the next haul may be brought on board the vessel. Mixing of sampled and non-sampled hauls could result in issues with catch accounting. NMFS recommends cleaning the decks of catch from previous hauls before dumping of subsequent hauls to avoid this.

Do I need to record the number of hauls by gear type? Does catch need to be kept separate by gear?

Vessels that choose to fish with both groundfish bottom and midwater trawl must keep all catch separate by gear type. However, vessels are not required to keep catch separate by haul. Vessel operators are required to keep track of and report the number of hauls in each management area.

Frequently Asked Questions

If I fish in more than one management area, how will the catch be prorated?

Under the new regulations, vessels will be allowed to fish in more than one IFQ management during the same trip and on the same tow. Vessels are required to record the number of tows in each management area. Catch will then be apportioned to the an area based on that ratio. For example, if F/V NMFS has five tows in Area A, two tows in Area B, and one tow across Areas A and B. Catch would be prorated 5.5 to 2.5 to Area A and B, respectively. For further examples, see page 4.

Why is SFFT still required between 42° N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat. and shoreward of the trawl RCA ?

NMFS determined that the Council's recommended changes to the selective flatfish trawl gear requirement shoreward of the trawl RCA between 42° N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat. are out of compliance with the terms and conditions of the December 2017 Salmon Incidental Take Statement. Term and Condition 4b requires that "prior to allowing additional non-whiting trawling south 42° N. lat., NMFS will implement one or more exempted fishing permits (EFPs) designed to collect information about Chinook and coho bycatch levels and stock composition from fishing in those areas or at those times for a minimum of three years." Because the area shoreward of the trawl RCA between 42° N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat. was not part of the exemption to the selective flatfish trawl gear requirement in the 2017 and 2018 EFPs, which was the Council's recommendation, NMFS cannot make changes to restrictions in this area that could result in additional non-whiting trawling effort. NMFS notified the Council of this preliminary determination at its September 2018 meeting in Seattle, Washington, and discussed this determination in more detail in the final rule for this action.

NMFS supports the continued use of EFPs to obtain data on potential impacts of changing the selective flatfish trawl gear requirement between 42° N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat. This information would help inform any future regulatory changes the Council recommends for this area and gear type.

I'm still confused, who can I talk to?

Please direct any questions on this rule or any others to the NMFS West Coast Groundfish Branch at 206-526-6150 or visit the West Coast Groundfish Website at

<https://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish/index.html>