

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The full SSC supplemental review meeting will focus on any additional analyses for the 2025 widow rockfish stock assessment as requested by the Pacific Council at their November 2025 meeting. The SSC will prepare their recommendations for the Pacific Council consideration at their March 2026 meeting. No management actions will be decided by the SSC.

The SSC GFSC's meeting will include, (a.) evaluation of the 2025 groundfish stock assessment review process to solicit process improvements for future reviews, (b.) discuss potential changes to the Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Stock Assessment Review Process for 2027 and 2028, and Terms of Reference for the Groundfish Rebuilding Analysis for 2027 and 2028, that will inform the process for conducting and reviewing groundfish assessments and rebuilding analyses in the next cycle, and (c.) discuss potential changes to the Accepted Practices Guidelines for Stock Assessments in 2027 and 2028, which is a compilation of guidelines for groundfish stock assessment scientists. Stock assessment teams and review participants are encouraged to attend, as well as members of the Pacific Council's groundfish advisory bodies in order to prepare their recommendations to the Pacific Council.

No management actions will be decided by the SSC GFSC. Process improvement recommendations and proposed changes to the Terms of Reference and Accepted Practices Guidelines documents will first be considered during this online meeting, with a GFSC post-meeting report to the full SSC at their March 2026 meeting. The Pacific Council is scheduled to conduct scoping of the Terms of Reference for the 2027–2028 stock assessment cycle at their March 2026 meeting in Sacramento, California. The Pacific Council is scheduled to adopt preliminary Terms of Reference for the 2027–2028 stock assessment cycle for public review at their June 2026 meeting and adopt final at their November 2026 meeting.

The primary purpose of the GMT work session is to prepare for 2026 Pacific Council meetings. Specific agenda items will include: 2027–28 harvest specifications and management measure process and workload and new management measure prioritization. The GMT may also address groundfish management actions the Pacific Council has indicated on their Year-at-a-Glance calendar, such as the 2026 Pacific whiting fishery, specifications flexibility, and stock assessment terms

of reference. A detailed agenda will be available on the Pacific Council's website prior to the meeting.

Although non-emergency issues not contained in the meeting agendas may be discussed, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during these meetings. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document and any issues arising after publication of this document that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

### Special Accommodations

Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Kris Kleinschmidt ([kris.kleinschmidt@pcouncil.org](mailto:kris.kleinschmidt@pcouncil.org); (503) 820–2412) at least 10 days prior to the meeting date.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: December 11, 2025.

### Rey Israel Marquez,

*Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XF371]

### North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of hybrid conference.

**SUMMARY:** The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) the Groundfish Harvest Control Rule Development Workshop will meet on January 20, 2026, and the Joint Groundfish Plan Teams will meet on January 21, 2026.

**DATES:** The meetings will be held on January 20, 2026 and January 21, 2026, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Pacific Standard Time (PST).

**ADDRESSES:** The meetings will be hybrid conferences. The in-person component of the meetings will be held at the Alaska Fishery Science Center in the Traynor Room 2076, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Building 4, Seattle, WA 98115. If you plan to attend either meeting in person you need to notify Diana Stram

([dstram@npfmc.org](mailto:dstram@npfmc.org)) at least 2 days prior to the meeting (or 2 weeks prior if you are a foreign national). You will also need a valid U.S. Identification Card.

**Council address:** North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1007 W 3rd Ave., Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501–2252; telephone: (907) 271–2809. Instructions for attending the meeting via video conference are given under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**, below.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Sara Cleaver, Council staff; email: [scleaver@npfmc.org](mailto:scleaver@npfmc.org) or Diana Stram, Council staff; email [dstram@npfmc.org](mailto:dstram@npfmc.org).

For technical support, please contact our administrative staff; email: [support@npfmc.org](mailto:support@npfmc.org); or telephone: 907–271–2809.

### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### Agenda

*Tuesday, January 20, 2026*

Groundfish Harvest Control Rule Development Workshop

This public workshop will discuss and refine draft frameworks for moving towards more climate resilient harvest control rules (HCRs) under the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish fishery management plan (FMP) harvest specifications process. The agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3115>.

*Wednesday, January 21, 2026*

Groundfish Plan Team Meeting

Joint BSAI/GOA Groundfish Plan Team meeting: Review the 2025 harvest specifications process; review and make recommendations for a range of draft frameworks for climate resilient HCRs. The agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3114> prior to the meeting, along with meeting materials.

### Connection Information

You can attend the meetings online using a computer, tablet, smartphone, or by phone. Instructions and connection details for joining the Groundfish Harvest Control Rule Development Workshop via videoconference will be available at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3115>.

Instructions and connection details for joining the Groundfish Plan Team Meeting via videoconference will be available at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3114>.

### Public Comment

Public comment letters will be accepted and should be submitted

electronically to <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3114> or <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3115>.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: December 11, 2025.

**Rey Israel Marquez,**

*Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF296]

### Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act Provisions; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

#### ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The EFP would allow federally permitted fishing vessels to fish outside fishery regulations in support of exempted fishing activities proposed by the Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR). Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before December 30, 2025.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit written comments by email: [nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov](mailto:nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov)

[noaa.gov](http://noaa.gov). Include in the subject line “Maine lobster fishery-dependent offshore ventless and commercial trap research program”. All comments received are a part of the public record and may be posted for public viewing without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “anonymous” as the signature if you wish to remain anonymous).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Elise Scholl, Fishery Management Specialist, [elise.scholl@noaa.gov](mailto:elise.scholl@noaa.gov), (978) 281-9189.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The applicant submitted a complete application for an EFP to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. This EFP would exempt the participating vessels from the following Federal regulations:

TABLE 1—REQUESTED EXEMPTIONS

| CFR citation  | Regulation                       | Need for exemption  |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| 50 CFR 697.21(c) .....  | Gear specification requirements. | To allow for closed escape vents and smaller trap mesh and entrance heads.  |
| § 697.19 (a–e) .....  | Trap limit requirements .....    | To allow for 3 additional traps per fishing vessel, for a total of up to 60 additional traps.   |
| § 697.19(j) .....   | Trap tag requirements .....      | To allow for the use of untagged traps (though each modified trap will have the participating fisherman’s identification attached).     |
| §§ 697.20(a), 697.20(d), 697.20(g), and 697.20(h)(1) and (2). | Possession restrictions .....    | To allow for onboard biological sampling of undersized, v-notched, and egg-bearing lobsters and undersized and egg-bearing Jonah crabs. |

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Project title .....            | Maine lobster fishery-dependent offshore ventless and commercial trap research program.  |
| Project start .....            | 1/01/2026.   |
| Project end .....              | 12/31/2026.  |
| Project objectives .....       | To conduct a survey, in partnership with the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF), to provide distribution, abundance, and biological data on juvenile lobsters and Jonah crabs from times and areas in Federal waters of the Gulf of Maine with low coverage from traditional surveys. |
| Project location .....         | Gulf of Maine: Statistical Areas 511, 512, and 513.  |
| Number of vessels .....        | Up to 20.  |
| Number of trips .....          | Up to 36 per vessel; up to 720 total.  |
| Trip duration (days) .....     | Up to 3 days.  |
| Total number of days .....     | Up to 108 per vessel; up to 2,160 total.   |
| Gear type(s) .....             | Trap.  |
| Number of tows or sets .....   | 1 per trip; up to 720 total.   |
| Duration of tows or sets ..... | 7–10 days.   |

### Project Narrative

This project would contribute to the ongoing effort by the CFRF to collect data on juvenile lobster and Jonah crab abundance and distribution in areas and times of the year with low or no coverage by traditional surveys. This would be year two of an ongoing project

that received an EFP with the same exemptions in 2024.

The 2024 survey identified 10 harvesters to participate in the first year of the program and were included on the 2024 EFP. Of those, nine harvesters have been trained and have begun data collection from commercial and ventless

traps. There are currently 27 ventless traps deployed within Lobster Management Area 1, spanning statistical areas 511, 512 and 513. To date, there have been 224 sampling events from ventless traps. 145 trips have had sampling from either commercial or ventless gear. Within both commercial