

statements on how the Council will consider opportunities for each sector;

- Remove initial issuance criteria for LE permits and shift this information to Stock Assessment Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) or other documents; and
- Remove references to permit endorsements that are no longer applicable to the groundfish fishery (*i.e.*, “B” endorsements and provisional “A” endorsements).

NMFS welcomes comments on the proposed FMP amendment through the end of the comment period. A proposed rule to implement amendment 36 has been submitted for Secretarial review and approval. NMFS expects to publish and request public review and comment on proposed regulations to implement amendment 36 in the near future. For public comments on the proposed rule to be considered in the approval or disapproval decision on amendment 36, those comments must be received by the end of the comment period on the proposed amendment. All comments received by the end of the comment period for the amendment, whether specifically directed to the amendment or the proposed rule, will be considered in the approval/disapproval decision.

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

Dated: December 11, 2025.

**Kelly Denit,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 251212-0183; RTID 0648-XF288]

### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Gulf of Alaska; 2026 and 2027 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish

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

**ACTION:** Proposed rule; harvest specifications and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS proposes 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications, apportionments, and Pacific halibut prohibited species catch limits for the groundfish fishery of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to

establish harvest limits for groundfish during the 2026 and 2027 fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP). The final 2026 harvest specifications will supersede those previously set in the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications, and the 2027 harvest specifications will be superseded in early 2027 when the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications are published. The final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications will be effective for one year from the publication of the final rule implementing those specifications, which is anticipated to publish in March 2026. The intended effect of this action is to conserve and manage the groundfish resources in the GOA in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

**DATES:** Comments must be received by January 5, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** A plain language summary of this proposed rule is available at <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/NOAA-NMFS-2025-1164>. You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2025-1164 by any of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov> and enter NOAA-NMFS-2025-1164 in the Search box. Click on the “Comment” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- **Mail:** Submit written comments to Gretchen Harrington, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.

**Instructions:** Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on <https://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address, *etc.*), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

Electronic copies of the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS), Record of Decision (ROD) for the

Final EIS, and the annual Supplementary Information Reports (SIR) to the Final EIS prepared for this action are available from <https://www.regulations.gov>. An updated 2026 SIR for the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications will be available from the same source. The final 2024 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report for the groundfish resources of the GOA, dated December 2024, is available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at 1007 West Third, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252, phone 907-271-2809, or from the Council’s website at: <https://www.npfmc.org>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**  
Abby Jahn, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the GOA groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the GOA under the FMP. The Council prepared and recommended the FMP under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801, *et seq.*). Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the FMP appear at 50 CFR parts 600, 679, and 680.

The FMP and its implementing regulations require that NMFS, after consultation with the Council, specify the total allowable catch (TAC) for each target species, the sum of which must be within the optimum yield (OY) range of 116,000 to 800,000 metric tons (mt) (§§ 679.20(a)(1)(i)(B) and 679.20(a)(2)). Section 679.20(c)(1) further requires NMFS to publish and solicit public comment on proposed annual TACs and apportionments thereof for each target species, Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, and seasonal allowances of pollock and Pacific cod. The proposed harvest specifications in tables 1 through 19 of this proposed rule would satisfy these requirements once finalized through a final rulemaking. For 2026 and 2027, the sum of the proposed TAC amounts is 464,741 mt.

Under § 679.20(c)(3), NMFS will publish the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications after: (1) considering comments received within the comment period (see **DATES**); (2) consulting with the Council at its December 2025 meeting; (3) considering information presented in the 2026 SIR to the Final EIS that assesses the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS (see **ADDRESSES**); and (4) considering information presented in the final 2024 SAFE report, including the Ecosystem Status Report (ESR) for the GOA. The final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications will be effective for one year from the publication of the final rule implementing those

specifications, which is anticipated to publish in March 2026.

#### Other Actions Affecting the 2026 and 2027 GOA Harvest Specifications

In October 2025, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF), which manages fisheries in State of Alaska (State) waters, adopted a proposal to increase the South Alaska Peninsula guideline harvest level (GHL) from 30 percent to 35 percent. This action affects the available Pacific cod TAC in the Western GOA and subsequent sectors whose allocations are derived from the Western GOA TAC because the TAC is adjusted to account for the GHL amount. NMFS intends to reflect this change in the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications for Pacific cod TAC and allocations for the Western GOA.

#### Proposed Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) and TAC Specifications

In October 2025, the Council, its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and its Advisory Panel (AP) reviewed the most recent biological and harvest information on the condition of the GOA groundfish stocks. The Council's GOA Groundfish Plan Team (Plan Team) compiled and presented this information in the final 2024 SAFE report for the GOA groundfish fisheries, dated December 2024 (see **ADDRESSES**). The SAFE report contains a review of the latest scientific analyses and estimates of each species' biomass and other biological parameters including possible future condition of the stocks, as well as summaries of the available information on the GOA ecosystem and the economic condition of the GOA groundfish fisheries off Alaska. The SAFE provides information to the Council and NMFS for recommending and setting, respectively, annual harvest levels for each stock and documenting significant trends or changes in the resource, marine ecosystems, and fisheries over time. An appendix to the SAFE report is the Ecosystem Status Reports (ESRs). The ESRs compile and summarize information about the status of the Alaska marine ecosystems for the Plan Team, SSC, AP, Council, NMFS, and the public, and are updated annually. These ESRs include ecosystem report cards, ecosystem assessments, and ecosystem-based management indicators (e.g., climate indices, sea surface temperature) which together provide context for ecosystem-based fisheries management in Alaska. The ESRs inform stock assessments and are integrated in the annual harvest recommendations through inclusion in stock assessment-specific risk tables. Also, the ESR information provides

context for the SSC's recommendations for overfishing limits (OFL) and ABCs, as well as for the Council's TAC recommendations. The SAFE reports and the ESRs are typically presented at the October and December Council meetings before the SSC, AP, and the Council make groundfish harvest specification recommendations and aid NMFS in implementing these annual groundfish harvest specifications.

In addition to the 2024 SAFE report, the Plan Team, SSC, and Council also reviewed preliminary 2025 survey data, updates on ecological and socioeconomic profiles for certain species, and summaries of potential changes to models and methodologies. From these data and analyses, the Plan Team recommends, and the SSC sets, the proposed OFL and ABC for each species and species group. The proposed 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs are based on the 2024 SAFE report. The AP and Council recommended that the proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs be set equal to proposed ABCs for all species and species groups, with the exception of the species and species groups further discussed below. The individual stock assessments that comprise, in part, the 2024 SAFE report are available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/north-pacific-groundfish-stock-assessment-and-fishery-evaluation>.

The proposed 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs are based on the best available biological and scientific information, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised technical methods used to calculate stock biomass. The FMP specifies the tiers to be used to calculate OFLs and ABCs. The tier applicable to a particular stock or stock complex is determined by the level of reliable information available to the fisheries scientists. This information is categorized into a successive series of six tiers to define OFLs and ABCs, with tier 1 representing the highest level of information quality available and tier 6 representing the lowest level of information quality available. The Plan Team used the FMP tier structure to calculate OFLs and ABCs for each groundfish species. The SSC adopted the proposed 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs recommended by the Plan Team for all groundfish species. The proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs are based on the best available biological and socioeconomic information. In making its recommendations, the Council adopted the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations and the AP's TAC

recommendations for all groundfish species.

NMFS has reviewed the recommendations of the SSC and Council for OFLs, ABCs, and TACs for target species and species groups in the GOA as well as any other relevant information. Based on that review, NMFS is proposing the OFLs, ABCs, and TACs set forth in the tables of this proposed rule as consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the FMP, and other applicable law, subject to further review and consideration after public comment.

#### Potential Changes Between Proposed and Final Specifications

In November of each year, the Plan Team typically updates the SAFE report to include new information collected such as NMFS surveys, revised stock assessments drafted by stock assessment authors, and catch data. Due to the lapse in appropriations and resulting government shutdown from October 1, 2025, through November 12, 2025, the stock assessment authors were not able to complete their assessments and the Plan Team did not meet in November to review and update the 2024 SAFE report.

At the December 2025 Council meeting, the SSC and Council plan to consider the most recent and complete SAFE, ecosystem information presented in September/October as well as updated information on climate and oceanography, and other information including updated catch reports and survey information. The Council will also consider, as it normally does, SSC and AP recommendations, public testimony, and relevant written public comments in recommending the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications. Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(2) and (3), the Council could recommend that NMFS adjust the final TACs, if warranted, based on the biological condition of groundfish stocks or a variety of socioeconomic considerations, or if required for the sum of TACs to fall within the OY range.

In previous years, the most significant changes to the OFLs and ABCs from the proposed to the final harvest specifications have been based on the most recent NMFS stock surveys and model updates. These surveys provide updated estimates of stock biomass and spatial distribution, and inform changes to the models used for producing stock assessments. At the September 2025 Plan Team meeting, NMFS scientists presented updated and new survey results. Scientists also discussed potential changes to assessment models, and accompanying preliminary stock

estimates. At the October 2025 Council meeting, the SSC reviewed this information. Normally, the Plan Team would then review survey results, model changes, and updated stock assessments for groundfish stocks at the November Plan Team meeting, which the SSC would then review, along with the Plan Team recommendations, at the December SSC meeting. Model changes based on SSC recommendations often result in changes to final OFLs, ABCs, and TACs. This year, however, there are likely to be limited changes between the proposed and final specifications because no model reruns or additional review could be completed by the Plan Team due to the lapse in appropriations and the government shutdown.

#### *Specification and Apportionment of TAC Amounts*

The combined Western and Central Regulatory Areas and the West Yakutat (WYK) District of the Eastern Regulatory Area (W/C/WYK) pollock TAC and the GOA Pacific cod TACs are set to account for the GHLs for the State waters pollock and Pacific cod fisheries so that the ABCs are not exceeded. The GOA-wide octopus TAC accounts for the GHL of 16 mt (35,000 lbs rounded). These reductions are described below. The shallow-water flatfish TAC in the Western Regulatory Area, arrowtooth flounder TAC in the Western Regulatory Area, and flathead sole TAC in the Western Regulatory Area are set to allow for increased harvest opportunities for these target species while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other fisheries. The Atka mackerel TAC is set to accommodate incidental catch amounts (ICA) in other fisheries. The other rockfish TAC in the Southeast Outside (SEO) District of the Eastern Regulatory Area is set to reduce discards of species in that complex.

NMFS's proposed apportionments of groundfish species are based on the distribution of biomass among the regulatory areas over which NMFS manages the species. Additional regulations govern the apportionment of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish. Additional detail on apportionments of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish are described below.

The proposed 2026 and 2027 TAC for the pollock stock in the combined W/C/WYK Regulatory Area is set to account for the GHL established by the State for the Prince William Sound (PWS) pollock fishery. The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council have recommended that the sum of all pollock removals from State waters and Federal waters pollock in the GOA not exceed ABC

recommendations. State fisheries managers set the PWS GHL at 2.5 percent of the annual W/C/WYK pollock ABC. For 2026 and 2027, this would yield a projected PWS pollock GHL of 3,326 mt, a decrease of 26.5 percent from the 2025 PWS GHL of 4,526 mt. After reductions for the PWS GHL, the remaining 2026 and 2027 W/C/WYK pollock ABC is then apportioned among four statistical areas (areas 610, 620, 630, and 640), as described below and detailed in table 1. The total TACs for the four statistical areas, plus the State GHL, do not exceed the W/C/WYK pollock ABC. For 2026 and 2027, the proposed W/C/WYK pollock ABC is 133,075 mt, and the proposed TAC is 129,749 mt.

Apportionments of pollock to the W/C/WYK management areas are considered to be apportionments of the TAC. This more accurately reflects that such apportionments address management concerns, rather than biological or conservation concerns. In addition, apportionments in this manner allow NMFS to balance any transfer of TAC among Areas 610, 620, and 630 pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B) to ensure that the ABC, ACL, and total TAC for the stock (W/C/WYK pollock) are not exceeded.

NMFS proposes pollock TACs in the Western Regulatory Area (area 610), Central Regulatory Area (areas 620 and 630), the West Yakutat District (area 640), and the SEO District (area 650) of the GOA (see table 1). NMFS also proposes seasonal apportionment of the annual pollock TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA among Statistical areas 610, 620, and 630. These apportionments are divided equally among the following two seasons: the A season (January 20 through May 31) and the B season (September 1 through November 1) (§§ 679.23(d)(2) and 679.20(a)(5)(iv)). Additional detail is provided below in table 2.

The proposed 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs are set to account for the State's GHLs for Pacific cod in State waters in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, as well as in PWS (in the Eastern Regulatory Area) (see table 1). The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council recommended that the sum of all Pacific cod removals from State waters and Federal waters in the GOA not exceed ABC recommendations. Accordingly, the Council recommended the 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs in the Western, Central, and Eastern Regulatory Areas to account for State GHLs. Therefore, the proposed 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs are reduced by

the following amounts: (1) Western GOA, 2,455 mt; (2) Central GOA, 4,816 mt; and (3) Eastern GOA, 687 mt. These amounts reflect the State's 2026 and 2027 GHLs in these areas, which are 30 percent for the Western GOA, and 25 percent for the Eastern and Central GOA.

The Western and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs are allocated among various gear and operational sectors. NMFS also establishes seasonal apportionments of the annual Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas. The Pacific cod sector allocations and seasonal apportionments are discussed in detail in a subsequent section and in table 4 of this proposed rule.

The Council's recommendation for sablefish area apportionments takes into account the prohibition on the use of trawl gear in the SEO District of the Eastern Regulatory Area (§ 679.7(b)(1)) and makes available 5 percent of the Eastern Regulatory Area (WYK and SEO Districts combined) TAC to vessels using trawl gear for use as incidental catch in other trawl groundfish fisheries in the WYK District (§ 679.20(a)(4)(i)). Additional detail is provided below. Tables 5 and 6 list the proposed 2026 and 2027 allocations of the sablefish TAC to fixed gear and trawl gear in the GOA.

For 2026 and 2027, the Council recommends, and NMFS proposes, the OFLs, ABCs, and TACs listed in table 1. These amounts are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report. The proposed ABCs reflect harvest amounts that are less than the specified OFLs. The proposed TACs are adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations and do not exceed the ABCs. The sum of the proposed TACs for all GOA groundfish is 464,741 mt for 2026 and 2027, which is within the OY range specified by the FMP. These proposed amounts and apportionments by area, season, and sector are subject to change pending consideration of the SSC and AP recommendations, public comment, and the Council's recommendations for the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications during its December 2025 meeting. The final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications will be effective for one year from the publication of the final rule implementing those specifications, which is anticipated to publish in March 2026.

TABLE 1—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 OFLs, ABCs, AND TACs OF GROUNDFISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/WEST YAKUTAT, WESTERN, CENTRAL, AND EASTERN REGULATORY AREAS, THE WEST YAKUTAT AND SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE DISTRICTS OF THE EASTERN REGULATORY AREA, AND GULF-WIDE DISTRICT OF THE GULF OF ALASKA

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Area <sup>1</sup>	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock <sup>2</sup>	Shumagin (610) .....	.....	27,453	27,453
	Chirikof (620) .....	.....	60,477	60,477
	Kodiak (630) .....	.....	37,936	37,936
	WYK (640) .....	.....	3,883	3,883
	W/C/WYK (subtotal) .....	153,971	133,075	129,749
	SEO (650) .....	12,998	9,749	9,749
	Total .....	166,969	142,824	139,498
	W .....	.....	8,182	5,727
	C .....	.....	19,263	14,447
	E .....	.....	2,748	2,061
Pacific Cod <sup>3</sup>	Total .....	36,459	30,193	22,235
	W .....	.....	4,687	4,687
	C .....	.....	9,622	9,622
	WYK .....	.....	2,652	2,652
	SEO .....	.....	5,589	5,589
	Subtotal TAC .....	.....	n/a	22,550
	Total .....	57,797	47,008	n/a
	W .....	.....	23,902	13,250
	C .....	.....	28,455	28,455
	WYK .....	.....	2,846	2,846
Sablefish <sup>4</sup>	SEO .....	.....	1,707	1,707
	Total .....	69,610	56,910	46,258
	W .....	.....	231	231
	C .....	.....	2,568	2,568
	WYK .....	.....	1,795	1,795
	SEO .....	.....	2,238	2,238
	Total .....	8,114	6,832	6,832
	W .....	.....	3,353	3,353
	C .....	.....	13,582	13,582
	WYK .....	.....	1,413	1,413
Shallow-water flatfish <sup>5</sup>	SEO .....	.....	2,825	2,825
	Total .....	25,743	21,173	21,173
	W .....	.....	33,716	14,500
	C .....	.....	68,511	68,511
	WYK .....	.....	6,719	6,719
	SEO .....	.....	11,039	11,039
	Total .....	143,347	119,985	100,769
	W .....	.....	13,757	8,650
	C .....	.....	22,083	22,083
	WYK .....	.....	4,018	4,018
Deep-water Flatfish <sup>6</sup>	SEO .....	.....	2,122	2,122
	Total .....	51,176	41,980	36,873
	W .....	.....	1,688	1,688
	C .....	.....	27,156	27,156
	WYK .....	.....	1,993	1,993
	SEO .....	.....	6,672	6,672
	Total .....	44,826	37,509	37,509
	W .....	.....	1,346	1,346
	C .....	.....	3,549	3,549
	E .....	n/a	n/a	0
Rex sole	Total .....	5,848	4,895	4,895
	W .....	.....	34	34
	C .....	.....	189	189
	E .....	.....	424	424
	Total .....	863	647	647
	W .....	.....	199	199
	C .....	.....	5,527	5,527
	Total .....	.....	.....	.....
	Total .....	.....	.....	.....
	Total .....	.....	.....	.....

TABLE 1—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 OFLs, ABCs, AND TACs OF GROUNDFISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/WEST YAKUTAT, WESTERN, CENTRAL, AND EASTERN REGULATORY AREAS, THE WEST YAKUTAT AND SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE DISTRICTS OF THE EASTERN REGULATORY AREA, AND GULF-WIDE DISTRICT OF THE GULF OF ALASKA—Continued  
[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Area <sup>1</sup>	OFL	ABC	TAC
Rougheye/Blackspotted rockfish <sup>11</sup>	WYK .....	.....	204	204
	SEO .....	.....	91	91
	Total .....	7,319	6,021	6,021
	W .....	.....	229	229
	C .....	.....	366	366
	E .....	.....	608	608
Demersal shelf rockfish <sup>12</sup>	Total .....	1,631	1,203	1,203
	W/C/WYK .....	361	271	271
	SEO .....	524	394	394
	W .....	.....	206	206
	C .....	.....	590	590
	E .....	.....	542	542
Thornyhead rockfish <sup>13</sup>	Total .....	1,784	1,338	1,338
	W/C/WYK .....	.....	1,084	1,084
	SEO .....	.....	2,421	300
Other rockfish <sup>14</sup>	Total .....	4,618	3,505	1,384
	GW .....	6,200	4,700	3,000
	W .....	.....	745	745
	C .....	.....	1,749	1,749
	E .....	.....	341	341
Atka mackerel .....	Total .....	3,780	2,835	2,835
Big skate <sup>15</sup>	W .....	.....	104	104
	C .....	.....	1,894	1,894
	E .....	.....	538	538
Longnose skate <sup>16</sup>	Total .....	3,380	2,536	2,536
	GW .....	887	665	665
	GW .....	6,521	4,891	4,891
	GW .....	1,307	980	964
Total .....	Total .....	649,064	539,295	464,741

<sup>1</sup> Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2. (W = Western Gulf of Alaska; C = Central Gulf of Alaska; E = Eastern Gulf of Alaska; WYK = West Yakutat District; SEO = Southeast Outside District; GW = Gulfwide).

<sup>2</sup> The total for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas pollock ABC is 133,075. After deducting 2.5 percent (3,326 mt) of the ABC for the State's pollock GHL fishery, the remaining amount of 129,749 mt (for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas) is apportioned among four statistical areas (Areas 610, 620, 630, and 640). The TACs in Areas 610, 620, and 630 are further divided by season, as detailed in table 2 (proposed 2026 and 2027 seasonal biomass distribution of pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, area apportionments, and seasonal allowances). In the West Yakutat (Area 640) and Southeast Outside (Area 650) Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, pollock TACs are not divided into seasonal allowances.

<sup>3</sup> The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned, after seasonal apportionment to the jig sector, as follows: (1) 63.84 percent to the A season and 36.16 percent to the B season; and (2) 64.16 percent to the A season and 35.84 percent to the B season in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA, respectively. The Pacific cod TAC in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA is allocated 90 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component and 10 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component. Table 4 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod seasonal apportionments and sector allocations.

<sup>4</sup> The sablefish OFL and ABC are set Alaska-wide (57,797 mt and 47,008 mt, respectively), and the GOA sablefish TAC is 22,550 mt. Tables 5 and 6 list the proposed 2026 and 2027 allocations of sablefish TACs.

<sup>5</sup> "Shallow-water flatfish" means flatfish not including "deep-water flatfish," flathead sole, rex sole, or arrowtooth flounder.

<sup>6</sup> "Deep-water flatfish" means Dover sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, and deep sea sole.

<sup>7</sup> "Pacific ocean perch" means *Sebastodes alutus*.

<sup>8</sup> "Northern rockfish" means *Sebastodes polypinnis*. For management purposes, the 1 mt apportionment of ABC to the WYK District of the Eastern Regulatory Area has been included in the other rockfish species group.

<sup>9</sup> "Shortraker rockfish" means *Sebastodes borealis*.

<sup>10</sup> "Dusky rockfish" means *Sebastodes variabilis*.

<sup>11</sup> "Rougheye and blackspotted rockfish" means *Sebastodes aleutianus* (rougheye) and *Sebastodes melanostictus* (blackspotted).

<sup>12</sup> "Demersal shelf rockfish" means *Sebastodes pinniger* (canary), *S. nebulosus* (china), *S. caurinus* (copper), *S. maliger* (quillback), *S. helvomaculatus* (rosethorn), *S. nigrocinctus* (tiger), and *S. ruberrimus* (yelloweye).

<sup>13</sup> "Thornyhead rockfish" means *Sebastolobus* species.

<sup>14</sup> "Other rockfish" means *Sebastodes aurora* (aurora), *S. melanostomus* (blackgill), *S. paucispinis* (bocaccio), *S. goodei* (chilipepper), *S. crameri* (darkblotch), *S. elongatus* (greenstriped), *S. variegatus* (harlequin), *S. wilsoni* (pygmy), *S. babcocki* (redbanded), *S. proriger* (redstripe), *S. zacentrus* (sharpchin), *S. jordani* (shortbelly), *S. brevispinis* (silvergray), *S. diploproa* (splitnose), *S. saxicola* (stripetail), *S. miniatus* (vermillion), *S. reedi* (yellowmouth), *S. entomelas* (widow), and *S. flavidus* (yellowtail). In the Eastern GOA only, other rockfish also includes northern rockfish (*S. polypinnis*).

<sup>15</sup> Other rockfish in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas and in the West Yakutat District of the Eastern Regulatory Area means all rockfish species included in the other rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish categories. The other rockfish species group in the SEO District only includes other rockfish.

<sup>16</sup> "Big skates" means *Beringraja binoculata*.

<sup>17</sup> "Longnose skates" means *Raja rhina*.

<sup>18</sup> “Other skates” means *Bathyraja*.

#### *Proposed Apportionment of Reserves*

Section 679.20(b)(2) requires NMFS to set aside 20 percent of each TAC for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sharks, and octopuses in reserve for possible apportionment at a later date during the fishing year. Section 679.20(b)(3) authorizes NMFS to reapportion all or part of these reserves. In 2025, NMFS reapportioned all of the reserves in the final harvest specifications. For 2026 and 2027, NMFS proposes reapportionment of each of the reserves for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sharks, and octopuses back into the original TAC from which the reserve was derived. NMFS expects, based on recent harvest patterns, that such reserves will not be necessary and that the entire TAC for each of these species will be caught or are needed to promote efficient fisheries. The TACs in table 1 reflect this proposed reapportionment of reserve amounts to the original TAC for these species and species groups (*i.e.*, each proposed TAC for the above-mentioned species or species groups contains the full TAC recommended by the Council).

#### *Proposed Apportionments of Pollock TAC Among Seasons and Regulatory Areas, and Allocations for Processing by Inshore and Offshore Components*

In the GOA, pollock is apportioned by season and is further allocated for processing by inshore and offshore components. Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B), the annual pollock TAC specified for the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA is apportioned into two seasonal allowances of 50 percent. As established by § 679.23(d)(2), the A and B season allowances are available from January

20 through May 31 and September 1 through November 1, respectively.

Pollock TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA are apportioned among statistical areas 610, 620, and 630 in proportion to the distribution of pollock biomass determined by the most recent NMFS surveys, pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(A). The pollock chapter of the 2024 SAFE report (see **ADDRESSES**) contains a comprehensive description of the apportionment and reasons for the minor changes from past apportionments. Pollock is specified between two seasons for the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA (A and B seasons). There are four seasonal apportionments: A, B, C, and D seasons, as outlined in the 2024 GOA pollock assessment in the 2024 SAFE report. The GOA pollock stock assessment continues to use a four-season methodology to determine pollock distribution in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA to maintain continuity in the historical pollock apportionment time-series. A and B seasons from the assessment are aggregated into the A season for the purposes of specifications and C and D seasons from the assessment are aggregated into the B season for the purposes of specifications. This method is described and calculated in the 2024 GOA pollock assessment.

Within any fishing year, the amount by which a seasonal allowance is underharvested or overharvested may be added to, or subtracted from, the subsequent seasonal allowance in a manner to be determined by the Regional Administrator (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B)). The rollover amount is limited to 20 percent of the

subsequent seasonal TAC apportionment for the statistical area. Any unharvested pollock above the 20-percent limit could be further distributed to the subsequent season in the other statistical areas, in proportion to the estimated biomass of the subsequent season and in an amount no more than 20 percent of the seasonal TAC allowance in those statistical areas (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B)). The proposed 2026 and 2027 pollock TACs in the WYK District of 3,883 mt and the SEO District of 9,749 mt are not allocated by season.

Table 2 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 area apportionments and seasonal allowances of pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown. Section 679.20(a)(6)(i) requires allocation of 100 percent of the pollock TAC in all regulatory areas and all seasonal allowances to vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component after subtraction of amounts projected by the Regional Administrator to be caught by, or delivered to, the offshore component incidental to directed fishing for other groundfish species. Thus, the amount of pollock available for harvest by vessels harvesting pollock for processing by the offshore component is the amount that will be taken as incidental catch during directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock, up to the maximum retainable amounts allowed by § 679.20(e) and (f). At this time, these ICAs of pollock are unknown and will be determined during the fishing year during the course of fishing activities by the offshore component.

TABLE 2—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 AREA APPORTIONMENTS BASED ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF POLLOCK IN THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN REGULATORY AREAS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA; AND SEASONAL ALLOWANCES OF ANNUAL TAC<sup>1</sup>  
[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Season <sup>2</sup>	Shumagin (610)	Chirikof (620)	Kodiak (630)	Total <sup>3</sup>
A season .....	4,109	46,510	12,314	62,933
B season .....	23,344	13,967	25,622	62,933
Annual total .....	27,453	60,477	37,936	125,866

<sup>1</sup> Area apportionments and seasonal allowances may not total precisely due to rounding.

<sup>2</sup> As established by § 679.23(d)(2), the A and B season allowances are available from January 20 through May 31 and September 1 through November 1, respectively. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown in this table.

<sup>3</sup> The West Yakutat and Southeast Outside District pollock TACs are not allocated by season and are not included in the total pollock TACs shown in this table.

*Proposed Annual and Seasonal Apportionments of Pacific Cod TAC*

NMFS proposes allocations for the 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA among gear and operational sectors consistent with

§ 679.20(a)(12)(i), which sets forth the sector allocations by percentage of TAC. NMFS also proposes seasonal apportionments of the Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas consistent with § 679.20(a)(12), which specifies the apportionments by season for gear and operational sectors.

A portion of the annual TAC is apportioned to the A season for hook-and-line, pot, and jig gear from January 1 through June 10, and for trawl gear from January 20 through June 10. The remainder of the annual TAC is apportioned to the B season for jig gear from June 10 through December 31, for hook-and-line and pot gear from September 1 through December 31, and for trawl gear from September 1 through November 1 (§§ 679.23(d)(3) and 679.20(a)(12)). NMFS also proposes allocating the 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs annually between the inshore (90 percent) and offshore (10 percent) components in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA as required by § 679.20(a)(6)(ii).

In the Western GOA, the Pacific cod TAC is apportioned seasonally first to vessels using jig gear, and then among catcher vessels (CV) using hook-and-line gear, catcher/processors (CP) using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, CPs using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear (§ 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A)). In the Central GOA, the Pacific cod TAC is apportioned seasonally first to vessels using jig gear, and then among CVs less than 50 feet (15.2 meters (m)) in length

overall using hook-and-line gear, CVs equal to or greater than 50 feet (15.2 m) in length overall using hook-and-line gear, CPs using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, CPs using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear (§ 679.20(a)(12)(i)(B)). For 2026 and 2027, NMFS proposes apportioning the jig sector allocations for the Western and Central GOA between the A season (60 percent) and the B season (40 percent) as required by § 679.20(a)(12)(i). Excluding seasonal apportionments to the jig gear sector, NMFS proposes apportioning the remainder of the annual Pacific cod TACs as required by § 679.20(a)(12)(i) as follows: the seasonal apportionments of the annual TAC in the Western GOA are 63.84 percent to the A season and 36.16 percent to the B season, and in the Central GOA are 64.16 percent to the A season and 35.84 percent to the B season.

Under § 679.20(a)(12)(ii), any overage or underage of the Pacific cod allowance from the A season may be subtracted from, or added to, the subsequent B season allowance. In addition, any portion of the hook-and-line, trawl, pot, or jig sector allocations that is determined by NMFS as likely to go unharvested by a sector may be reallocated to other sectors for harvest during the remainder of the fishing year consistent with the factors set forth in 50 CFR part 679.

Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A) and (B), a portion of the annual Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA will be allocated to vessels that use jig gear before the TACs are apportioned among other non-jig sectors. In accordance with the FMP, the annual jig sector allocations may increase to up to 6 percent of the annual Western and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs,

depending on the annual performance of the jig sector (see table 1 of amendment 83 to the FMP for a detailed discussion of the jig sector allocation process (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011)). Jig sector allocation increases are established for a minimum of 2 years.

NMFS has evaluated the historical harvest performance of the jig sector in the Western and Central GOA and is proposing the 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod apportionments to this sector based on its historical harvest performance through 2025, a process established by amendment 83. For 2026 and 2027 in the Western GOA, NMFS proposes that the jig sector receive 2.5 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC. The 2026 and 2027 allocation consists of a base allocation of 1.5 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod TAC and a remaining harvest performance allocation of 1 percent. The jig sector is unlikely to reach 90 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod allocation for the 2025 fishing year. Because the jig sector did not reach 90 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod allocation in the 2024 fishing year either, NMFS proposes that the harvest performance allocation decrease by 1 percent from the prior year allocation of 3.5 percent. For 2026 and 2027 in the Central GOA, NMFS proposes that the jig sector receive 4 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC. The 2026 and 2027 allocation consists of a base allocation of 1 percent and a harvest performance increase of 3 percent based on harvest performance through October 2025 because the jig sector reached 90 percent of its Central GOA Pacific cod allocation for the 2025 fishing year. The Pacific cod jig allocations, catch, and percent allocation changes from 2014 to 2025 are listed in table 3.

TABLE 3—SUMMARY OF WESTERN GOA AND CENTRAL GOA PACIFIC COD CATCH BY JIG GEAR IN 2014 THROUGH 2025, AND CORRESPONDING PERCENT ALLOCATION CHANGES

Area	Year	Initial percent of TAC	Initial TAC allocation	Catch (mt)	Percent caught of initial allocation	Greater than 90% of initial allocation?	Change to percent allocation
Western GOA .....	2014	2.5	573	785	137	Y	Increase 1.
	2015	3.5	948	55	6	N	None.
	2016	3.5	992	52	5	N	Decrease 1.
	2017	2.5	635	49	8	N	Decrease 1.
	2018	1.5	125	121	97	Y	Increase 1.
	2019	2.5	134	134	100	Y	Increase 1.
	2020	1 n/a					
	2021	3.5	195	26	13	N	None.
	2022	3.5	243	2	1	N	Decrease 1.
	2023	2.5	131	131	101	Y	Increase 1.
Central GOA .....	2024	3.5	214	17	8	N	None.
	2025	3.5	213	89	42	N	Decrease 1.
	2014	2	797	262	33	N	Decrease 1.
	2015	1	460	355	77	N	None.
	2016	1	370	267	72	N	None.
	2017	1	331	18	6	N	None.
	2018	1	61	0	0	N	None.
	2019	1	58	30	52	N	None.

TABLE 3—SUMMARY OF WESTERN GOA AND CENTRAL GOA PACIFIC COD CATCH BY JIG GEAR IN 2014 THROUGH 2025, AND CORRESPONDING PERCENT ALLOCATION CHANGES—Continued

Area	Year	Initial percent of TAC	Initial TAC allocation	Catch (mt)	Percent caught of initial allocation	Greater than 90% of initial allocation?	Change to percent allocation
	2020	<sup>1</sup> n/a					
	2021	1	102	26	26	N	None.
	2022	1	113	3	3	N	None.
	2023	1	111	246	222	Y	Increase 1.
	2024	2	309	303	98	Y	Increase 1.
	2025	3	462	444	96	Y	Increase 1.

<sup>1</sup> NMFS did not evaluate the 2020 performance of the jig sectors in the Western and Central GOA because NMFS prohibited directed fishing for all Pacific cod sectors in 2020 (84 FR 70438, December 23, 2019).

NMFS intends to re-evaluate the annual 2025 harvest performance of the jig sector in the Western and Central GOA when the 2025 fishing year is complete to determine whether to change the jig sector allocations proposed by this action in conjunction with the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications. Given the current

trajectory of harvest in the jig sector, it is unlikely that the allocations will change from what is described here. The current catch through November 2025 by the Western and Central GOA jig sectors indicates that the Pacific cod allocation percentage to the Western GOA jig sector would decrease by 1 percent and the Central GOA jig sector

would increase by 1 percent, which is reflected in the proposed allocations for the jig sector listed in table 4.

Table 4 lists the seasonal apportionments and allocations of the proposed 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs.

TABLE 4—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 SEASONAL APPORTIONMENTS AND ALLOCATIONS OF PACIFIC COD TAC AMOUNTS IN THE GOA; ALLOCATIONS TO THE WESTERN GOA AND CENTRAL GOA SECTORS, AND THE EASTERN GOA INSHORE AND OFFSHORE PROCESSING COMPONENTS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Regulatory area and sector	Annual allocation (mt)	A Season sector percentages of annual non-jig TAC	A Season allowances (mt)	B Season sector percentages of annual non-jig TAC	B Season allowances (mt)
Western GOA:					
Jig (2.5% of TAC) .....	143	n/a	86	n/a	57
Hook-and-line CV .....	78	0.7	39	0.7	39
Hook-and-line CP .....	1,106	10.9	609	8.9	497
Trawl CV .....	2,144	31.54	1,761	6.86	383
Trawl CP .....	134	0.9	50	1.5	84
Pot CV and Pot CP .....	2,122	19.8	1,106	18.2	1,016
Total .....	5,727	63.84	3,651	36.16	2,076
Central GOA:					
Jig (4% of TAC) .....	578	n/a	347	n/a	231
Hook-and-line <50 CV .....	2,025	9.32	1,292	5.29	733
Hook-and-line > = 50 CV .....	930	5.61	778	1.1	152
Hook-and-line CP .....	708	4.11	570	1	138
Trawl CV .....	5,767	25.29	3,508	16.29	2,259
Trawl CP <sup>1</sup> .....	582	2	278	2.19	304
Pot CV and Pot CP .....	3,856	17.83	2,473	9.98	1,383
Total .....	14,447	64.16	9,245	35.84	5,202
Eastern GOA .....		Inshore (90% of Annual TAC)	Offshore (10% of Annual TAC)		
Total .....	2,061		1,855		206

<sup>1</sup> Trawl catcher vessels participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives receive 3.81 percent, or 550 mt, of the annual Central GOA Pacific cod TAC (see Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679). This apportionment is deducted from the Trawl CV B season allowance (see table 9: Proposed 2026 and 2027 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA and Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679).

#### *Proposed Allocations of the Sablefish TAC Amounts to Vessels Using Fixed Gear and Trawl Gear*

Section 679.20(a)(4)(i) and (ii) requires allocations of sablefish TACs for each of the regulatory areas and

districts to fixed and trawl gear. In the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, 80 percent of each TAC is allocated to fixed gear, and 20 percent of each TAC is allocated to trawl gear. In the Eastern Regulatory Area, 95 percent of the TAC

is allocated to fixed gear, and 5 percent is allocated to trawl gear. The trawl gear allocation in the Eastern Regulatory Area may be used only to support incidental catch of sablefish while

directed fishing for other target species using trawl gear (§ 679.20(a)(4)(i)).

In recognition of the prohibition against trawl gear in the SEO District of the Eastern Regulatory Area, the Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, specifying for incidental catch the allocation of 5 percent of the Eastern Regulatory Area sablefish (WYK and SEO Districts combined) TAC to trawl gear in the WYK District of the Eastern Regulatory Area. The remainder of the WYK District sablefish TAC is allocated to vessels using fixed gear. This proposed action allocates 100 percent of the sablefish TAC in the SEO District to vessels using fixed gear. This results in proposed 2026 allocations of 412 mt to trawl gear and 2,240 mt to fixed gear in the WYK District, and a proposed 2026 allocation of 5,589 mt to fixed gear in the SEO District. The Council recommended that the trawl sablefish

TAC be established for 2 years so that retention of incidental catch of sablefish by trawl gear could commence in January in the second year of the groundfish harvest specifications. Table 5 lists the allocations of the proposed 2026 sablefish TACs to fixed and trawl gear. Table 6 lists the allocations of the proposed 2027 sablefish TACs to trawl gear.

The Council also recommended, and NMFS proposes, that the fixed gear sablefish TAC be established annually to ensure that the sablefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery is conducted concurrently with the halibut IFQ fishery and is based on the most recent survey information. Since NMFS anticipates publishing the final harvest specifications before the IFQ season begins (typically, in early March), the Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, that the fixed gear sablefish

TAC be set annually, rather than for 2 years. Accordingly, table 5 lists the proposed 2026 fixed gear allocations. The 2027 fixed gear allocations will be specified in the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications.

With the exception of the trawl allocations that are provided to the Rockfish Program (see Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679), directed fishing for sablefish with trawl gear is typically closed during the fishing year (see table 27 of the final 2025 and 2026 GOA harvest specifications, 90 FR 12468, March 18, 2025). Also, fishing for groundfish with trawl gear is prohibited prior to January 20 (§ 679.23(c)). Therefore, it is not likely that the sablefish allocation to trawl gear would be reached before the effective date of the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

TABLE 5—PROPOSED 2026 SABLEFISH TAC AMOUNTS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA AND ALLOCATIONS TO FIXED AND TRAWL GEAR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area/district	TAC	Fixed gear allocation	Trawl allocation
Western .....	4,687	3,750	937
Central <sup>1</sup> .....	9,622	7,698	1,924
West Yakutat <sup>2</sup> .....	2,652	2,240	412
Southeast Outside .....	5,589	5,589	0
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>22,550</b>	<b>19,277</b>	<b>3,273</b>

<sup>1</sup> The proposed trawl allocation of sablefish to the Central Regulatory Area is further apportioned to the Rockfish Program cooperatives (990 mt). See table 9: Proposed 2026 and 2027 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA. This results in 934 mt being available for the non-Rockfish Program trawl fisheries.

<sup>2</sup> The proposed trawl allocation is based on allocating 5 percent of the Eastern Regulatory Area (West Yakutat and Southeast Outside Districts combined) sablefish TAC as incidental catch to trawl gear in the West Yakutat District.

TABLE 6—PROPOSED 2027 SABLEFISH TAC AMOUNTS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA AND ALLOCATIONS TO TRAWL GEAR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area/district	TAC	Fixed gear allocation <sup>1</sup>	Trawl allocation
Western .....	4,687	n/a	937
Central <sup>2</sup> .....	9,622	n/a	1,949
West Yakutat <sup>3</sup> .....	2,652	n/a	412
Southeast Outside .....	5,589	n/a	0
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>22,550</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>3,273</b>

<sup>1</sup> The Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, that the 2027 harvest specifications for the fixed gear sablefish IFQ fisheries not be specified in the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications. The 2027 fixed gear allocations will be specified in the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications.

<sup>2</sup> The proposed trawl allocation of sablefish to the Central Regulatory Area is further apportioned to the Rockfish Program cooperatives (990 mt). See table 9: Proposed 2026 and 2027 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA. This results in 934 mt being available for the non-Rockfish Program trawl fisheries.

<sup>3</sup> The proposed trawl allocation is based on allocating 5 percent of the Eastern Regulatory Area (West Yakutat and Southeast Outside Districts combined) sablefish TAC as incidental catch to trawl gear in the West Yakutat District.

#### *Proposed Allocations, Apportionments, and Sideboard Limitations for the Rockfish Program*

These proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications for the GOA include the fishery cooperative

allocations and sideboard limitations established by the Rockfish Program. Participants in the Rockfish Program are primarily trawl CVs and trawl CPs, with limited participation by vessels using longline gear. The Rockfish Program

assigns quota share and cooperative quota to trawl participants for primary species (i.e., Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish) and secondary species (i.e., Pacific cod, rougheye and blackspotted rockfish,

sablefish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish), allows a participant holding a Limited License Program (LLP) license with rockfish quota share to form a rockfish cooperative with other persons, and allows holders of CP LLP licenses to opt out of the fishery. The Rockfish Program also has an entry level fishery for rockfish primary species for vessels using longline gear. Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear.

Under the Rockfish Program, rockfish primary species in the Central GOA are allocated to participants after deducting for incidental catch needs in other directed fisheries (§ 679.81(a)(2)). Participants in the Rockfish Program also receive a portion of the Central GOA TAC of specific secondary species. In addition to groundfish species, the Rockfish Program allocates a portion of the halibut PSC limit (191 mt) from the

third season deep-water species fishery allowance for the GOA trawl fisheries to Rockfish Program participants (§ 679.81(d) and Table 28d to 50 CFR part 679). The Rockfish Program also establishes sideboard limits to restrict the ability of participating harvesters to increase their participation in other, non-Rockfish Program fisheries. These restrictions and halibut PSC limits are discussed in the *Rockfish Program Groundfish Sideboard and Halibut PSC Limitations* section of this proposed rule.

Section 679.81(a)(2)(ii) and Table 28e to 50 CFR part 679 require allocations of 5 mt of Pacific ocean perch, 5 mt of northern rockfish, and 50 mt of dusky rockfish to the entry level longline fishery in 2026 and 2027. The allocations of primary species to the entry level longline fishery may increase incrementally each year if the catch exceeds 90 percent of the allocation of

a species. The incremental increase in the allocations would continue each year until reaching the maximum percentage of the TAC for that species. In 2025, the catch for all three primary species did not exceed 90 percent of any allocated rockfish species. Therefore, NMFS is not proposing any increases to the 2026 and 2027 entry level longline fishery allocations in the Central GOA. The remainder of the TACs for the rockfish primary species, after subtracting the ICAs, would be allocated to the CV and CP cooperatives (§ 679.81(a)(2)(iii)). Table 7 lists the allocations of the proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs for each rockfish primary species to the entry level longline fishery, the potential incremental increases for future years, and the maximum percentages of the TACs of the rockfish primary species allocations to the entry level longline fishery.

TABLE 7—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 ALLOCATIONS OF ROCKFISH PRIMARY SPECIES TO THE ENTRY LEVEL LONGLINE FISHERY IN THE CENTRAL GULF OF ALASKA

Rockfish primary species	Proposed 2026 and 2027 allocations (mt)	Incremental increase in 2026 if >90 percent of 2025 allocation is harvested (mt)	Up to maximum percent of TAC
Pacific ocean perch .....	5	5	1
Northern rockfish .....	5	5	2
Dusky rockfish .....	50	20	5

Allocations among vessels belonging to CV or CP cooperatives are not included in these proposed harvest specifications. Rockfish Program applications for CV cooperatives and CP cooperatives are not due to NMFS until March 1 of each calendar year; therefore, NMFS cannot calculate 2026 and 2027 cooperative allocations in conjunction with these proposed

harvest specifications. Cooperative allocations are calculated based on the formulas set forth in § 679.81(b), (c), and (e). NMFS will announce the 2026 cooperative allocations after March 1 in the **Federal Register**.

Table 8 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 allocations of rockfish primary species in the Central GOA to the entry level longline fishery and to the rockfish

program participants. NMFS also proposes setting aside ICAs for other directed fisheries in the Central GOA of 3,500 mt of Pacific ocean perch, 300 mt of northern rockfish, and 250 mt of dusky rockfish. These amounts are based on recent average incidental catches in the Central GOA by other groundfish fisheries.

TABLE 8—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 ALLOCATIONS OF ROCKFISH PRIMARY SPECIES IN THE CENTRAL GULF OF ALASKA TO THE ENTRY LEVEL LONGLINE FISHERY AND ROCKFISH COOPERATIVES IN THE ROCKFISH PROGRAM

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	TAC	Incidental catch allowance	TAC minus ICA	Initial allocation to entry level <sup>1</sup>	Allocation to rockfish program participants <sup>2</sup>
Pacific ocean perch .....	27,156	3,500	23,656	5	23,651
Northern rockfish .....	3,549	300	3,249	5	3,244
Dusky rockfish .....	5,527	250	5,277	50	5,227
Total .....	36,232	4,050	32,182	60	32,122

<sup>1</sup> Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear (50 CFR 679.2).

<sup>2</sup> Rockfish Program participants include vessels in CV and CP Rockfish Program cooperatives (50 CFR 679.81).

Section 679.81(c) and Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679 require allocations of rockfish secondary species to CV and CP

cooperatives in the Central GOA. CV cooperatives receive allocations of Pacific cod, sablefish from the trawl gear

allocation, and thornyhead rockfish. CP cooperatives receive allocations of sablefish from the trawl gear allocation,

rougheye and blackspotted rockfish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish. Table 9 lists the

apportionments of the proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs of rockfish secondary

species in the Central GOA to CV and CP cooperatives.

TABLE 9—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 APPORTIONMENTS OF ROCKFISH SECONDARY SPECIES IN THE CENTRAL GOA TO CATCHER VESSEL AND CATCHER/PROCESSOR COOPERATIVES

[Values are in metric tons]

Rockfish secondary species	Central GOA annual TAC	CV cooperatives percentage of TAC	CV cooperatives apportionment (mt)	CP cooperatives percentage of TAC	CP cooperatives apportionment (mt)
Pacific cod .....	14,447	3.81	550	n/a	n/a
Sablefish .....	9,622	6.78	652	3.51	338
Shortraker rockfish .....	189	n/a	n/a	40	76
Rougheye/blackspotted rockfish .....	366	n/a	n/a	58.87	215
Thornyhead rockfish .....	590	7.84	46	26.5	156

#### Halibut PSC Limits

Section 679.21(d) establishes annual halibut PSC limit apportionments to trawl and hook-and-line gear, and authorizes the establishment of apportionments for pot gear. In October 2025, the Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, halibut PSC limits of 1,705 mt for trawl gear, 256 mt for hook-and-line gear, and 9 mt for the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery in the SEO District for both 2026 and 2027.

The DSR fishery in the SEO District is defined at § 679.21(d)(2)(ii)(A). This fishery is apportioned 9 mt of the halibut PSC limit in recognition of its small-scale harvests of groundfish (§ 679.21(d)(2)(i)(A)). The separate halibut PSC limit for the DSR fishery is intended to prevent that fishery from being impacted from the halibut PSC incurred by other GOA fisheries. NMFS estimates low halibut bycatch in the DSR fishery because: (1) the duration of the DSR fisheries and the gear soak times are short; (2) the DSR fishery occurs in the winter when there is less overlap in the distribution of DSR and halibut; and (3) the directed commercial DSR fishery has a low DSR TAC. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game sets the commercial GHL for the DSR fishery after deducting: (1) estimates of DSR incidental catch in all fisheries (including halibut and subsistence); and (2) the allocation to the DSR sport fish fishery. The directed DSR fishery was closed in 2020 and remains closed due to concerns about declining DSR biomass.

NMFS, after consultation with the Council, proposes to exempt pot gear, jig gear, and the sablefish IFQ fixed gear fishery categories from the non-trawl halibut PSC limit for 2026 and 2027.

NMFS, in alignment with recommendations from the Council, is proposing these exemptions because: (1) pot gear fisheries have low annual halibut bycatch mortality; (2) NMFS estimates negligible halibut mortality for the jig gear fisheries given the small amount of groundfish harvested by jig gear, the selective nature of jig gear, and the high survival rates of halibut caught and released with jig gear; (3) IFQ program regulations prohibit discard of legal sized halibut if any halibut IFQ permit holder on board a CV holds unused halibut IFQ for that vessel category and the IFQ regulatory area in which the vessel is operating (§ 679.7(f)(11)); and (4) some sablefish IFQ permit holders hold halibut IFQ permits and are therefore required to retain the legal sized halibut they catch while fishing sablefish IFQ.

The best available information on estimated halibut bycatch consists of data collected by fisheries observers during 2025. The calculated halibut bycatch mortality through November 8, 2025, is 283 mt for trawl gear and 79 mt for hook-and-line gear, for a total halibut mortality of 362 mt. This halibut mortality was calculated using observer reports extrapolated to total groundfish harvest from the NMFS Alaska Region's catch accounting system.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(i) and (ii) authorizes NMFS to seasonally apportion the halibut PSC limits after consultation with the Council. The FMP and regulations require that NMFS and the Council consider the following information in seasonally apportioning halibut PSC limits: (1) seasonal distribution of halibut; (2) seasonal distribution of target groundfish species relative to halibut distribution; (3)

expected halibut bycatch needs on a seasonal basis relative to changes in halibut biomass and expected catch of target groundfish species; (4) expected bycatch rates on a seasonal basis; (5) expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons; (6) expected actual start of fishing effort; and (7) economic effects of establishing seasonal halibut allocations on segments of the target groundfish industry. Based on public comment, information presented in the 2024 SAFE report, NMFS catch data, State catch data, and International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) stock assessment and mortality data, the Council may recommend, or NMFS may make, changes to the seasonal, gear-type, or fishery category apportionments of halibut PSC limits for the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications pursuant to § 679.21(d)(1) and (4).

The final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications (March 18, 2025, 90 FR 12468) list the Council's and NMFS's seasonal apportionments based on these FMP and regulatory considerations with respect to halibut PSC limits. The Council's and NMFS's seasonal apportionments for these proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications are unchanged from the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications. Table 10 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 Pacific halibut PSC limits, allowances, and apportionments. The halibut PSC limits in tables 10, 11, and 12 reflect the halibut PSC limits set forth at § 679.21(d)(2) and (3). Section 679.21(d)(4)(iii) and (iv) specifies that any underages or overages of a seasonal apportionment of a halibut PSC limit will be added to or deducted from the next respective seasonal apportionment within the fishing year.

TABLE 10—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMITS, ALLOWANCES, AND APPORTIONMENTS  
[Values are in metric tons]

Gear	Season	Percent	Amount
Trawl .....	January 20–April 1 .....	30.50	520
	April 1–July 1 .....	20	341
	July 1–August 1 .....	27	460
	August 1–October 1 .....	7.50	128
	October 1–December 31 .....	15	256
Hook-and-line (other than DSR) <sup>1</sup> .....	Total .....	.....	1,705
	January 1–June 10 .....	86	220
	June 10–September 1 .....	2	5
	September 1–December 31 .....	12	31
	Total .....	.....	256
Hook-and-line (DSR) .....	January 1–December 31 .....	100	9

<sup>1</sup> The Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limit for hook-and-line gear is assigned to the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery in the SEO District and to hook-and-line fisheries other than the DSR fishery. The Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, that the fixed gear sablefish IFQ fishery, and the pot and jig gear groundfish fisheries, be exempt from halibut PSC limits.

Section 679.21(d)(3)(ii) authorizes further apportionment of the trawl halibut PSC limit as bycatch allowances to trawl fishery categories listed in § 679.21(d)(3)(iii). The annual apportionments are based on each category's share of the anticipated halibut bycatch mortality during a fishing year and optimization of the total amount of groundfish harvest under the halibut PSC limit. The fishery categories for the trawl halibut PSC limits are: (1) a deep-water species fishery, composed of sablefish, rockfish, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, and arrowtooth flounder; and (2) a shallow-water species fishery, composed of pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates, and “other species” (sharks and octopuses) (§ 679.21(d)(3)(iii)). Halibut mortality incurred while directed fishing for skates with trawl gear accrues towards the shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC limit (69 FR 26320, May 12, 2004).

NMFS will combine available trawl halibut PSC limit apportionments in part of the second season deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries for use in either fishery from May 15 through June 30 (§ 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(D)). This is intended to maintain groundfish harvest while minimizing halibut bycatch by these sectors to the extent practicable. This provides the trawl gear deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries additional flexibility and the incentive to participate in fisheries at times of the year that may have lower halibut PSC rates relative to other times of the year.

Table 11 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 seasonal apportionments of trawl halibut PSC limits between the trawl gear deep-water and the shallow-water species fisheries.

Table 28d to 50 CFR part 679 specifies the amount of the trawl halibut PSC limit that is assigned to the CV and CP sectors that are participating in the Central GOA Rockfish Program. This

includes 117 mt of halibut PSC limit to the CV sector and 74 mt of halibut PSC limit to the CP sector. These amounts are allocated from the trawl deep-water species fishery's halibut PSC third seasonal apportionment. After the combined CV and CP halibut PSC limit of 191 mt to the Rockfish Program, 149 mt remains for the trawl deep-water species fishery's halibut PSC third seasonal apportionment.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(B) limits the amount of the halibut PSC limit allocated to Rockfish Program participants that could be re-apportioned to the general GOA trawl fisheries for the last seasonal apportionment during the current fishing year to no more than 55 percent of the unused annual halibut PSC limit apportioned to Rockfish Program participants. The remainder of the unused Rockfish Program halibut PSC limit is unavailable for use by any person for the remainder of the fishing year (§ 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(C)).

TABLE 11—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 APPORTIONMENT OF THE PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMITS BETWEEN THE TRAWL GEAR SHALLOW-WATER AND DEEP-WATER SPECIES FISHERY CATEGORIES  
[Values are in metric tons]

Season	Shallow-water	Deep-water <sup>1</sup>	Total
January 20–April 1 .....	385	135	520
	85	256	341
	120	340	460
	53	75	128
	n/a	n/a	256
Total .....	n/a	n/a	1,705

<sup>1</sup> Vessels participating in cooperatives in the Central GOA Rockfish Program will receive 191 mt of the third season (July 1 through August 1) deep-water species fishery halibut PSC apportionment.

<sup>2</sup> There is no apportionment between trawl shallow-water and deep-water species fishery categories during the fifth season (October 1 through December 31).

Section 679.21(d)(2)(i)(B) requires that the halibut PSC limit apportionment to

vessels using hook-and-line gear that are not part of the demersal shelf rockfish

fishery (*i.e.*, the other hook-and-line fishery) must be apportioned between

CVs and CPs in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) in conjunction with these harvest specifications. A comprehensive description and example of the calculations necessary to apportion the other hook-and-line fishery halibut PSC limit between the hook-and-line CV and CP sectors were included in the proposed rule to implement amendment 83 to the FMP (76 FR 44700, July 26, 2011) and are not repeated here.

Pursuant to § 679.21(d)(2)(iii), the halibut PSC limit for the other hook-and-line fishery is apportioned between the CV and CP sectors in proportion to the total Western and Central GOA Pacific cod allocations, which vary annually based on the proportion of the Pacific cod biomass between the Western, Central, and Eastern GOA. Pacific cod is apportioned among these three management areas based on the percentage of overall biomass per area as calculated in the 2024 Pacific cod

stock assessment. Information in the final 2024 SAFE report describes this distributional calculation, which apportions ABC among GOA regulatory areas on the basis of the three most recent stock surveys. For 2026 and 2027, the proposed distribution of the total GOA Pacific cod ABC is 27.1 percent to the Western GOA, 63.8 percent to the Central GOA, and 9.1 percent to the Eastern GOA. Therefore, the calculations made in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) incorporate the most recent information on GOA Pacific cod distribution and allocations with respect to the proposed annual halibut PSC limits for the CV and CP hook-and-line sectors. Additionally, the annual halibut PSC limits for both the CV and CP sectors of the other hook-and-line fishery are proposed to be divided into three seasonal apportionments, using seasonal percentages of 86 percent, 2 percent, and 12 percent as established in § 679.21(d)(4).

For 2026 and 2027, NMFS proposes annual halibut PSC limits of 149 mt and 107 mt to the hook-and-line CV and hook-and-line CP sectors, respectively. Table 12 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 apportionments of halibut PSC limits between the hook-and-line CV and the hook-and-line CP sectors of the other hook-and-line fishery.

No later than November 1 of each year, NMFS will calculate the projected unused amount of halibut PSC limit by either of the CV or CP hook-and-line sectors of the other hook-and-line fishery for the remainder of the year. The projected unused amount of halibut PSC limit is made available to the other hook-and-line sector for the remainder of that fishing year (§ 679.21(d)(2)(iii)(C)) if NMFS determines that an additional amount of halibut PSC is necessary for that sector to continue its directed fishing operations.

TABLE 12—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 APPORTIONMENTS OF THE “OTHER HOOK-AND-LINE FISHERY” ANNUAL HALIBUT PSC ALLOWANCE BETWEEN THE HOOK-AND-LINE GEAR CATCHER VESSEL AND CATCHER/PROCESSOR SECTORS

[Values are in metric tons]

Sector	Other than DSR allowance	Sector annual amount	Season	Seasonal percentage	Seasonal amount
Catcher Vessel .....	256	149	A season: January 1–June 10 .....	86	128
			B season: June 10–September 1 .....	2	3
			C season: September 1–December 31 .....	12	18
Catcher/Processor .....		107	A season: January 1–June 10 .....	86	92
			B season: June 10–September 1 .....	2	2
			C season: September 1–December 31 .....	12	13

#### Halibut Discard Mortality Rates

To monitor halibut bycatch mortality allowances and apportionments, the Regional Administrator uses observed halibut bycatch rates, halibut discard mortality rates (DMR), and estimates of groundfish catch to project when a fishery's halibut bycatch mortality allowance or seasonal apportionment is reached. Halibut bycatch rates are based on observed estimates of halibut bycatch in the groundfish fishery. DMRs are estimates of the proportion of halibut bycatch that do not survive after being returned to the sea. The cumulative halibut mortality that accrues to a particular halibut PSC limit is the product of a DMR multiplied by the estimated halibut PSC. DMRs are estimated using the best scientific information available in conjunction

with the annual GOA stock assessment process.

The DMRs are calculated annually based on a methodology developed by a halibut working group made up of IPHC, Council, and NMFS staff. The DMR methodology and findings are included as an appendix to the 2024 SAFE report. The halibut working group continues to consider improvements to the methodology used to calculate halibut mortality, including potential changes to the reference period (the period of data used for calculating the DMRs). Future DMRs may change based on additional years of observer sampling, which could provide more recent and accurate data and which could improve the accuracy of estimation and progress on methodology. The methodology will continue to ensure that NMFS is using

DMRs that more accurately reflect halibut mortality, which will inform the different sectors of their estimated halibut mortality and allow specific sectors to respond with methods that could reduce mortality and, eventually, the DMR for that sector.

In October 2025, the SSC reviewed the DMRs recommended by the Plan Team that were derived from the DMR methodology, which uses a 2-year and 4-year reference period depending data availability. The Council then reviewed and recommended proposed 2026 and 2027 DMRs. NMFS is proposing the DMRs reviewed by the SSC and recommended by the Council in October 2025 for the proposed 2026 and 2027 DMRs. Table 13 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 DMRs.

TABLE 13—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 HALIBUT DISCARD MORTALITY RATES FOR VESSELS FISHING IN THE GULF OF ALASKA

[Values are percent of halibut assumed to be dead]

Gear	Sector	Groundfish fishery	Halibut discard mortality rate
Pelagic trawl .....	Catcher Vessel .....	All .....	1.00
Pelagic trawl .....	Catcher/Processor .....	All .....	1.00
Non-pelagic trawl .....	Catcher Vessel .....	Rockfish Program .....	0.53
Non-pelagic trawl .....	Catcher Vessel .....	All others .....	0.62
Non-pelagic trawl .....	Mothership and Catcher/Processor .....	All .....	0.79
Hook-and-line .....	Catcher/Processor .....	All .....	0.12
Hook-and-line .....	Catcher Vessel .....	All .....	0.15
Pot .....	Mothership and Catcher/Processor .....	All .....	0.29

#### *Chinook Salmon PSC Limits*

Section 679.21(h)(2) establishes separate Chinook salmon PSC limits in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA in the trawl pollock directed fishery. These limits require that NMFS close directed fishing for pollock in the Western and Central GOA if the applicable Chinook salmon PSC limit is reached (§ 679.21(h)(8)). The annual Chinook salmon PSC limits in the trawl pollock directed fishery of 6,684 salmon in the Western GOA and 18,316 salmon in the Central GOA are set in § 679.21(h)(2)(i) and (ii).

Section 679.21(h)(3) and (4) establishes an initial annual PSC limit of 7,500 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock groundfish trawl fisheries in the Western and Central GOA. This limit is apportioned among the three sectors that conduct directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock: (1) 3,600 Chinook salmon to trawl CPs; (2) 1,200 Chinook salmon to trawl CVs participating in the Rockfish Program; and (3) 2,700 Chinook salmon to trawl CVs not participating in the Rockfish Program (§ 679.21(h)(4)). NMFS will monitor the Chinook salmon PSC in the trawl non-pollock GOA groundfish fisheries and close an applicable sector if it reaches its Chinook salmon PSC limit.

The Chinook salmon PSC limit for two sectors, trawl CPs and trawl CVs not participating in the Rockfish Program, may be increased in subsequent years based on the performance of these two sectors and their ability to minimize their use of their respective Chinook salmon PSC limits. If either or both of these two sectors limit its use of

Chinook salmon PSC to a certain threshold amount through the end of 2025 (3,120 for trawl CPs and 2,340 for non-Rockfish Program trawl CVs), that sector will receive an increase to its 2026 Chinook salmon PSC limit (4,080 for trawl CPs and 3,060 for non-Rockfish Program trawl CVs) (§ 679.21(h)(4)). NMFS will evaluate the annual Chinook salmon PSC by trawl CPs and non-Rockfish Program trawl CVs when the 2025 fishing year is complete to determine whether to increase the Chinook salmon PSC limits for these two sectors. Based on preliminary 2025 Chinook salmon PSC data, the trawl CP sector may receive an increase of Chinook salmon PSC limit in 2026, and the non-Rockfish Program trawl CV sector may receive an increase of Chinook salmon PSC limit in 2026. NMFS intends to complete this evaluation in conjunction with the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

#### *American Fisheries Act (AFA) CP and CV Groundfish Harvest and PSC Limits*

Section 679.64 establishes groundfish harvesting and processing sideboard limits on AFA CPs and CVs in the GOA. These sideboard limits are necessary to protect the interests of fishermen and processors who do not directly benefit from the AFA from those fishermen and processors who receive exclusive harvesting and processing privileges under the AFA. Section 679.7(k)(1)(ii) prohibits listed AFA CPs and CPs designated on a listed AFA CP permit from harvesting any species of fish in the GOA. Additionally, § 679.7(k)(1)(iv) prohibits listed AFA CPs and CPs designated on a listed AFA CP permit

from processing any pollock harvested in a directed pollock fishery in the GOA and any groundfish harvested in statistical area 630 of the GOA.

AFA CVs that are less than 125 feet (38.1 meters) length overall, have annual landings of pollock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands of less than 5,100 mt, and have made at least 40 landings of GOA groundfish from 1995 through 1997 are exempt from GOA CV groundfish sideboard limits under § 679.64(b)(2)(ii). Sideboard limits for non-exempt AFA CVs in the GOA are based on their traditional harvest levels of TAC in groundfish fisheries covered by the FMP. Section 679.64(b)(3)(iv) establishes the CV groundfish sideboard limits in the GOA based on the aggregate retained catch by non-exempt AFA CVs of each sideboard species from 2009 through 2019; divided by the TAC for that species available to CVs from 2009 through 2019; multiplied by the TAC available to CVs in the year or season in which the harvest limit will be in effect. Table 56 to 50 CFR part 679 lists the GOA groundfish species and species groups for which directed fishing for sideboard limits by non-exempt AFA CVs is prohibited (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iv)(D)). Sideboard limits that are not subject to these directed fishing prohibitions continue to be calculated and included in the GOA annual harvest specifications.

Table 14 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 groundfish sideboard limits for non-exempt AFA CVs. NMFS will deduct all targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species made by non-exempt AFA CVs from these sideboard limits.

TABLE 14—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS  
[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Seasonal apportionments	Area	Ratio of 2009–2019 non-exempt AFA CV retained catch to 2009–2019 TAC	Proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs	Proposed 2026 and 2027 non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limit
Pollock .....	A Season: January 20–May 31 .....	Shumagin (610) .....	0.057	4,109	234
		Chirikof (620) .....	0.064	46,510	2,977
		Kodiak (630) .....	0.091	12,314	1,121
	B Season: September 1–November 1 .....	Shumagin (610) .....	0.057	23,344	1,331
		Chirikof (620) .....	0.064	13,967	894
		Kodiak (630) .....	0.091	25,622	2,332
	Annual .....	WYK (640) .....	0.026	3,883	101
	A Season: January 20–June 10 .....	W .....	0.009	3,651	33
		C .....	0.011	9,245	102
	B Season: September 1–November 1 .....	W .....	0.009	2,076	19
Shallow-water flatfish .....	Annual .....	C .....	0.011	5,202	57
Rex sole .....	Annual .....	C .....	0.011	28,455	313
Arrowtooth flounder .....	Annual .....	C .....	0.014	13,582	190
Flathead sole .....	Annual .....	C .....	0.011	68,511	754
		C .....	0.007	22,083	155

*Non-Exempt AFA Catcher Vessel Halibut PSC Limit*

Pursuant to § 679.64(b)(4)(ii), the non-exempt AFA CVs and the associated LLP licenses PSC limit for halibut in the GOA will be an annual amount based on a static ratio of 0.072, which was derived from the aggregate retained groundfish catch by non-exempt AFA CVs in each PSC target category from 2009 through 2019. Table 15 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC sideboard limits for vessels using trawl gear in the GOA.

TABLE 15—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) HALIBUT PSC SIDEBOARD LIMITS

Ratio (percent)	Annual trawl gear halibut PSC limit (mt)	Annual non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC limit (mt)
0.072 .....	1,705	123

*Non-AFA Crab Vessel Groundfish Harvest Limitations*

Section 680.22 establishes groundfish sideboard limits for vessels with a history of participation in the Bering Sea snow crab fishery to prevent these vessels from using the increased flexibility provided by the Crab Rationalization (CR) Program to expand their level of participation in the GOA groundfish fisheries. Sideboard harvest limits restrict these vessels' catch to their collective historical landings in each GOA groundfish fishery (except the fixed-gear sablefish fishery). Sideboard limits also apply to landings made using an LLP license derived from the history of a restricted vessel, even if that LLP license is used on another vessel.

The basis for these sideboard harvest limits is described in detail in the final rules implementing the major provisions of the CR Program, including amendments 18 and 19 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (Crab FMP) (70 FR 10174, March 2,

2005), amendment 34 to the Crab FMP (76 FR 35772, June 20, 2011), amendment 83 to the GOA FMP (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011), and amendment 45 to the Crab FMP (80 FR 28539, May 19, 2015). Also, NMFS published a final rule (84 FR 2723, February 8, 2019) that implemented regulations to prohibit non-AFA crab vessels from directed fishing for all groundfish species or species groups subject to sideboard limits, except for Pacific cod apportioned to CVs using pot gear in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas (§ 680.22(e)(1)(iii)). Accordingly, the GOA annual harvest specifications include only the non-AFA crab vessel groundfish sideboard limits for Pacific cod apportioned to CVs using pot gear in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas.

Table 16 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 groundfish sideboard limits for non-AFA crab vessels. All targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species made by non-AFA crab vessels or associated LLP licenses will be deducted from these sideboard limits.

TABLE 16—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 GOA NON-AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Season	Sector	Ratio of 1996–2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	Proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs	Proposed 2026 and 2027 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit
Pacific cod .....	A Season: January 1–June 10 .....	Western Pot CV .....	0.0997	3,651	364
		Central Pot CV .....	0.0474	9,245	438

TABLE 16—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 GOA NON-AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS—Continued  
[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Season	Sector	Ratio of 1996–2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	Proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs	Proposed 2026 and 2027 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit
	B Season: September 1–December 31	Western Pot CV ..... Central Pot CV .....	0.0997 0.0474	2,076 5,202	207 247

*Rockfish Program Groundfish Sideboard and Halibut PSC Limitations*

The Rockfish Program establishes three classes of sideboard provisions: CV groundfish sideboard restrictions, CP rockfish sideboard restrictions, and CP opt-out vessel sideboard restrictions (§ 679.82(c)(1)). These sideboards are intended to limit the ability of rockfish harvesters to expand into other fisheries.

CVs participating in the Rockfish Program may not participate in directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the Western GOA and West Yakutat District from July 1 through July 31. Also, CVs may not participate in directed fishing for arrowtooth flounder, deep-water flatfish, and rex sole in the GOA from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(d)).

CPs participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives are restricted by rockfish and halibut PSC sideboard limits. These CPs are prohibited from directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the Western

GOA and West Yakutat District from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(e)(2)). The sideboard ratio for each rockfish fishery in the West Yakutat District is an established percentage of the TAC for CPs in the directed fishery for dusky rockfish and Pacific ocean perch (§ 679.82(e)(4)). These percentages are confidential, however, the method for determining the percentages is described in § 679.82(e)(3). Holders of CP-designated LLP licenses that opt out of participating in a Rockfish Program cooperative will be able to access that portion of each rockfish sideboard limits that is not assigned to Rockfish Program cooperatives (§ 679.82(e)(7)).

Under the Rockfish Program, the CP sector is subject to halibut PSC sideboard limits for the trawl deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(e)(3) and (e)(5)). Halibut PSC sideboard ratios by fishery are set forth in § 679.82(e)(5). No halibut PSC sideboard limits apply to the CV sector, as vessels participating in a Rockfish

Program cooperative receive a portion of the annual halibut PSC limit. CPs that opt out of the Rockfish Program would be able to access that portion of the deep-water and shallow-water halibut PSC sideboard limit not assigned to CP Rockfish Program cooperatives. The sideboard provisions for CPs that elect to opt out of participating in a Rockfish Program cooperative are described in § 679.82(c), (e), and (f). Sideboard limits are linked to the catch history of specific vessels that may choose to opt out. After March 1, NMFS will determine which CPs have opted-out of the Rockfish Program in 2026, and will know the ratios and amounts used to calculate opt-out sideboard ratios. NMFS will then calculate any applicable opt-out sideboard limits for 2026. NMFS will announce the opt-out sideboard limits after March 1 in the **Federal Register**. Table 17 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 Rockfish Program halibut PSC sideboard limits for the CP sector.

TABLE 17—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 ROCKFISH PROGRAM HALIBUT PSC SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR THE CATCHER/PROCESSOR SECTOR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Sector	Shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	Deep-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	Annual trawl gear halibut PSC limit (mt)	Annual shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)	Annual deep-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)
Catcher/processor .....	0.1	2.5	1,705	2	43

*Amendment 80 Program Groundfish and PSC Sideboard Limits*

Amendment 80 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (Amendment 80 Program) established a limited access privilege program for the non-AFA trawl CP sector. The Amendment 80 Program established groundfish and halibut PSC limits for Amendment 80 Program participants to limit the ability of

participants eligible for the Amendment 80 Program to expand their harvest efforts in the GOA.

Section 679.92 establishes groundfish harvesting sideboard limits on all Amendment 80 Program vessels to amounts no greater than the limits shown in Table 37 to 50 CFR part 679. The Amendment 80 vessel, the F/V *Golden Fleece*, is not subject to halibut PSC sideboard limits (§ 679.92(b)(2)) and is prohibited from directed fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, Pacific ocean

perch, dusky rockfish, and northern rockfish in the GOA (§ 679.92(d)).

Groundfish sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels operating in the GOA are based on their average aggregate harvests from 1998 through 2004 (72 FR 52668, September 14, 2007). Table 18 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 groundfish sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels. NMFS will deduct all targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species

made by Amendment 80 Program vessels from these sideboard limits.

TABLE 18—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 GOA GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR AMENDMENT 80 PROGRAM VESSELS  
[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Season	Area	Ratio of Amendment 80 sector vessels 1998–2004 catch to TAC	Proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs	Proposed 2026 and 2027 Amendment 80 vessel sideboard limits
Pollock .....	A Season: January 20–May 31 .....	Shumagin (610) .....	0.003	4,109	12
	A Season: January 20–May 31 .....	Chirikof (620) .....	0.002	46,510	93
	A Season: January 20–May 31 .....	Kodiak (630) .....	0.002	12,314	25
	B Season: September 1–November 1 .....	Shumagin (610) .....	0.003	23,344	70
	B Season: September 1–November 1 .....	Chirikof (620) .....	0.002	13,967	28
	B Season: September 1–November 1 .....	Kodiak (630) .....	0.002	25,622	51
	Annual .....	WYK (640) .....	0.002	3,883	8
	A Season: January 20–June 10 .....	W .....	0.020	3,651	73
	A Season: January 20–June 10 .....	C .....	0.044	9,245	407
	B Season: September 1–November 1 .....	W .....	0.020	2,076	42
	B Season: September 1–November 1 .....	C .....	0.044	5,202	229
Pacific ocean perch .....	Annual .....	WYK .....	0.034	2,061	70
Pacific ocean perch .....	Annual .....	W .....	0.994	1,688	1,678
Pacific ocean perch .....	Annual .....	WYK .....	0.961	1,993	1,915
Northern rockfish ....	Annual .....	W .....	1.000	1,346	1,346
Dusky rockfish .....	Annual .....	W .....	0.764	199	152
Dusky rockfish .....	Annual .....	WYK .....	0.896	204	183

The halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels in the GOA are based on the historical use of halibut PSC by Amendment 80 Program vessels in each PSC target category from 1998 through 2004. These values are slightly lower than the average historical use to accommodate two

factors: (1) allocation of halibut PSC cooperative quota under the Rockfish Program; and (2) the exemption of the F/V *Golden Fleece* from this restriction (§ 679.92(b)(2)). Table 19 lists the proposed 2026 and 2027 halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels. This table incorporates

the maximum percentages of the halibut PSC sideboard limits that may be used by Amendment 80 Program vessels as contained in Table 38 to 50 CFR part 679. Any residual amount of a seasonal Amendment 80 halibut PSC sideboard limit may carry forward to the next season limit (§ 679.92(b)(2)).

TABLE 19—PROPOSED 2026 AND 2027 HALIBUT PSC SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR AMENDMENT 80 PROGRAM VESSELS IN THE GOA

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Season	Season dates	Target fishery	Historic Amendment 80 use of the annual halibut PSC limit catch (ratio)	Annual trawl gear halibut PSC limit (mt)	Proposed Amendment 80 vessel PSC limit (mt)
1 .....	January 20–April 1 .....	shallow-water .....	0.0048	1,705	8
		deep-water .....	0.0115	1,705	20
2 .....	April 1–July 1 .....	shallow-water .....	0.0189	1,705	32
		deep-water .....	0.1072	1,705	183
3 .....	July 1–August 1 .....	shallow-water .....	0.0146	1,705	25
		deep-water .....	0.0521	1,705	89
4 .....	August 1–October 1 .....	shallow-water .....	0.0074	1,705	13
		deep-water .....	0.0014	1,705	2
5 .....	October 1–December 31 .....	shallow-water .....	0.0227	1,705	39
		deep-water .....	0.0371	1,705	63
Annual .....		Total shallow water .....	.....	.....	117
		Total deep water .....	.....	.....	357
		Grand total, all seasons and categories	.....	.....	474

#### Classification

NMFS is issuing this proposed rule pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Through

previous actions, the FMP and regulations are designed to authorize NMFS to take this action under section 305(d) (see 50 CFR part 679). The NMFS Assistant Administrator has

preliminarily determined that the proposed harvest specifications are consistent with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable laws,

subject to further review and consideration after public comment.

NMFS finds that a comment period of at least 15 days for this action provides a reasonable opportunity for public participation pursuant to Administrative Procedure Act section 553(c) (5 U.S.C. 553(c)). Section 3.2.3.1.2 of the FMP notes the public review and comment period on the proposed harvest specifications will be at least 15 days. This year a shorter comment period is necessary to ensure the final harvest specifications publish no later than March 17, 2026, while providing the public with a meaningful opportunity for review and comment. The subject of this proposed rule—the annual harvest specifications—is based on the established harvest strategy and harvest control rules and tier system in the FMP. NMFS was unable to publish the proposed rule any earlier and afford a longer comment period due to the lapse in appropriations and resulting government shutdown. A prolonged comment period and subsequent potential delay in implementation of this action before the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications expire on March 17, 2026, would be contrary to public interest and could result in the closure of the GOA groundfish fisheries until the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications are published.

This action is authorized under 50 CFR 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order (E.O.) 12866 because it only implements annual catch limits in the GOA. This action is not a regulatory action under E.O. 14192 because it is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

NMFS prepared an EIS for the Alaska groundfish harvest specifications and alternative harvest strategies (see **ADDRESSES**) and made it available to the public on January 12, 2007 (72 FR 1512). On February 13, 2007, NMFS issued the ROD for the Final EIS. A SIR is being prepared for the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications to address the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS. Copies of the Final EIS, ROD, and annual SIRs for this action are available from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**). The Final EIS analyzes the environmental, social, and economic consequences of the proposed groundfish harvest specifications and alternative harvest strategies on resources in the action area. Based on the analysis in the Final EIS, NMFS concluded that the preferred alternative (alternative 2) provides the best balance among relevant environmental, social, and economic considerations and allows for continued management of the groundfish fisheries

based on the most recent, best scientific information.

#### **Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis**

This Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) was prepared for this proposed rule, as required by Section 603 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) (5 U.S.C. 603), to describe the economic impact that this proposed rule, if adopted, would have on small entities. The IRFA describes: (1) the action; (2) the reasons why this proposed rule is proposed; (3) the objectives and legal basis for this proposed rule; (4) the estimated number and description of directly regulated small entities to which this proposed rule would apply; (5) the recordkeeping, reporting, and other compliance requirements of this proposed rule; and (6) the relevant Federal rules that may duplicate, overlap, or conflict with this proposed rule. The IRFA also describes significant alternatives to this proposed rule that would accomplish the stated objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and any other applicable statutes, and that would minimize any significant economic impact of this proposed rule on small entities. The description of the proposed action, its purpose, and the legal basis are explained earlier in the preamble and are not repeated here.

For RFA purposes only, NMFS has established a small business size standard for businesses, including their affiliates, whose primary industry is commercial fishing (see 50 CFR 200.2). A business primarily engaged in commercial fishing (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 11411) is classified as a small business if it is independently owned and operated, is not dominant in its field of operation (including its affiliates), and has combined annual gross receipts not in excess of \$11 million for all its affiliated operations worldwide. A shoreside processor primarily involved in seafood processing (NAICS code 311710) is classified as a small business if it is independently owned and operated, is not dominant in its field of operation (including its affiliates), and has combined annual employment, counting all individuals employed on a full-time, part-time, or other basis, not in excess of 750 employees for all its affiliated operations worldwide.

#### **Number and Description of Small Entities Regulated by This Proposed Rule**

The entities directly regulated by the groundfish harvest specifications include: (1) entities operating vessels with groundfish Federal fisheries

permits (FFPs) catching FMP groundfish in Federal waters (including those receiving direction allocations of groundfish); (2) all entities operating vessels, regardless of whether they hold groundfish FFPs, catching FMP groundfish in the State-waters parallel fisheries; and (3) all entities operating vessels fishing for halibut that have incidental catch of FMP groundfish (whether or not they have FFPs).

In 2024 (the most recent year of complete data), there were 602 individual CVs and CPs with gross revenues less than or equal to \$11 million. This represents the potential suite of directly regulated small entities. This includes an estimated 601 small CV entities and one small CP entity in the GOA groundfish sector. The determination of entity size is based on vessel revenues and affiliated group revenues. This determination also includes an assessment of fisheries cooperative affiliations, although actual vessel ownership affiliations have not been completely established. However, the estimate of these 602 CVs and CPs may be an overstatement of the number of small entities because of the complexity of analyzing the links and affiliations across these vessels, particularly since many of them conduct operations in both Federal and State fisheries. The CVs had average gross revenues that varied by gear type. Average gross revenues for hook-and-line CVs, pot gear CVs, and trawl gear CVs are estimated to be \$460,000, \$920,000, and \$2,400,000, respectively. Average gross revenues for CPs are confidential.

#### **Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Other Compliance Requirements and Relevant Federal Rules That May Duplicate, Overlap, or Conflict With This Proposed Rule**

This action would not impose recordkeeping and reporting requirements. This action would set TAC and PSC limits that NMFS utilizes for the management of the groundfish fishery in the GOA. If a TAC limit or PSC limit has been or will be reached, NMFS can take action to prevent exceeding the specified limit. Entities operating in the GOA must follow any inseason actions that NMFS issues and comply with Federal regulations at 50 CFR part 679. The specific compliance requirements for entities operating in the GOA are set by regulations that are separate from this action. This action does not duplicate, overlap, or conflict with any Federal rules.

## Description of Significant Alternatives That Minimize Adverse Impacts on Small Entities

The action under consideration is the proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications, apportionments, and Pacific halibut prohibited species catch limits for the groundfish fishery of the GOA. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for groundfish during the 2026 and 2027 fishing years and is taken in accordance with the FMP recommended by the Council and approved by NMFS pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The establishment of the proposed harvest specifications is governed by the Council and NMFS's harvest strategy for the catch of groundfish in the GOA. This strategy was selected from among five alternatives, with the preferred alternative harvest strategy being one in which the TACs fall within the range of ABCs recommended by the SSC through the harvest specifications process. Under the preferred harvest strategy, TACs are set to a level that falls within the range of ABCs recommended by the SSC through the harvest specifications process and the sum of the TACs achieve the OY specified in the FMP and regulations. While the specific numbers that the harvest strategy produces may vary from year to year, the methodology used for the preferred harvest strategy remains constant.

The TACs associated with preferred harvest strategy are those recommended by the Council in October 2025. OFLs and ABCs for the species were based on recommendations prepared by the Council's Plan Team in September 2025, and reviewed by the Council's SSC in October 2025. The Council based its TAC recommendations on those of its AP, which were consistent with the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations. The TACs in these proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications are unchanged from the 2026 TACs in the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications (90 FR 12468, March 18, 2025), and the sum of all TACs remains within the OY for the GOA.

The proposed 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs are based on the best biological information available, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised technical methods to calculate stock biomass. The proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs are based on the best biological and socioeconomic information available. The proposed 2026 and 2027 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE

report, which is the most recent, completed SAFE report.

Under this action, the proposed ABCs reflect harvest amounts that are less than the specified OFLs. The proposed TACs are within the range of proposed ABCs recommended by the SSC and do not exceed the biological limits recommended by the SSC (the ABCs and OFLs). For most species and species groups in the GOA, the Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, TACs equal to proposed ABCs, which is intended to maximize harvest opportunities in the GOA.

However, the Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, TACs that are less than the proposed ABCs for some species, including pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, other rockfish, Atka mackerel, and octopus. In the GOA, increasing TACs for some species may not result in increased harvest opportunities for those species. This is due to a variety of reasons. There may be a lack of commercial or market interest in some species. Additionally, there are fixed, and therefore constraining, PSC limits associated with the harvest of the GOA groundfish species that can limit harvest of flatfish TACs. For this reason, the shallow-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, and flathead sole TACs are set to allow for increased harvest opportunities for these target species while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other fisheries. The other rockfish and Atka mackerel TACs are set to accommodate ICAs in other fisheries. Finally, the TACs for pollock, Pacific cod, and octopus cannot be set equal to their ABCs, as the TAC account for the State's GHLs in these fisheries. The W/C/WYK Regulatory Area pollock TAC, the GOA Pacific cod TACs, and the GOA octopus TAC are therefore set to account for the State's GHLs for the State waters pollock, Pacific cod, and octopus fisheries so that the ABCs for these species are not exceeded. For all other species in the GOA, the Council recommended and NMFS proposes that proposed TACs equal proposed ABCs, unless other conservation or management reasons (as described above) support proposed TAC amounts less than the proposed ABCs.

Based upon the best scientific data available, and in consideration of the Council and NMFS's objectives for this action, there are no significant alternatives to the proposed rule that have the potential to accomplish the stated objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and any other applicable statutes and that have the potential to minimize any significant adverse

economic impact of the proposed rule on small entities. The alternative selected and implemented in this action—the proposed TACs recommended by the Council—maximizes harvesting opportunities for entities operating in the GOA, including small entities, while minimizing potential adverse economic impacts. In this action, NMFS proposes for most species and species groups in the GOA TACs that are equal to the maximum amounts allowed (ABCs), consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act for the specification of ABC and annual catch limits, unless other reasons justify a lower TAC.

As explained above, there are other reasons that justify specifying TAC below ABC, as a higher TAC up to the ABC would not result in increased harvest opportunities or harvest of that species. There may be a lack of commercial or market interest in some species, while some species are caught only incidentally or are subject to fixed, and therefore constraining, PSC limits associated that can limit harvest. For species subject to constraining PSC limits (shallow-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, and flathead sole), the TACs are set to allow for increased harvest opportunities for these target species while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other fisheries. For other species (other rockfish and Atka mackerel), the TACs are set to accommodate ICAs in other fisheries. For these species, increasing TACs for these species would not result in increased harvest opportunities or harvest of those species. For this reason, the Council did not recommend and NMFS does not propose increased TAC for these species.

As a whole, this action is economically beneficial to entities operating in the GOA, including small entities. The action proposes TACs for commercially valuable species in the GOA and allows for the continued prosecution of the fishery, thereby creating the opportunity for fishery revenue. The proposed TACs were reviewed by participants in the fishing industry, including the AP and the public, and were recommended by the Council to NMFS after public review and comment during the October Council meeting. After public process, during which the Council solicited input from stakeholders, the Council concluded and NMFS agrees that the proposed harvest specifications would best accomplish the stated objectives articulated in the preamble for this proposed rule, and in applicable statutes, and would minimize to the extent practicable adverse economic

impacts on the universe of directly regulated small entities.

This proposed rule contains no information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501, *et seq.*).

Adverse impacts on marine mammals or endangered or threatened species resulting from fishing activities conducted under these harvest specifications are discussed in the Final EIS and its accompanying annual SIRs (see **ADDRESSES**).

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 1540(f); 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 3631 *et seq.*; Pub. L. 105–277; Pub. L. 106–31; Pub. L. 106–554; Pub. L. 108–199; Pub. L. 108–447; Pub. L. 109–241; Pub. L. 109–479.

Dated: December 12, 2025.

**Samuel D. Rauch III,**

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 251212–0184; RTID 0648–XF348]

### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands; 2026 and 2027 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish

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

**ACTION:** Proposed rule; harvest specifications and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS proposes 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications, apportionments, and prohibited species catch limits for the groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) management area. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for groundfish during the 2026 and 2027 fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP). The 2026 harvest specifications supersede those previously set in the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications, and the 2027 harvest specifications will be superseded in early 2027 when the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications are

published. The intended effect of this action is to conserve and manage the groundfish resources in the BSAI in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

**DATES:** Comments must be received by January 5, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** A plain language summary of this proposed rule is available at <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/NOAA-NMFS-2025-1098>. You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2025–1098 by any of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov> and type NOAA–NMFS–2025–1098 in the Search box. Click on the “Comment” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- **Mail:** Submit written comments to Gretchen Harrington, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802–1668.

**Instructions:** Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on <https://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, *etc.*), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

Electronic copies of the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS), Record of Decision (ROD) for the Final EIS, and the annual Supplementary Information Reports (SIR) to the Final EIS prepared for this action are available from <https://www.regulations.gov>. An updated 2026 SIR for the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications will be available from the same source.

The final 2024 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report for the groundfish resources of the BSAI, dated December 2024, is available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at 1007 West Third, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501–2252, phone 907–271–2809, or from the Council’s website at <https://www.npfmc.org> and at <https://www.npfmc.org>

[www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/north-pacific-groundfish-stock-assessments-and-fishery-evaluation](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/north-pacific-groundfish-stock-assessments-and-fishery-evaluation).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew Olson and Steven Whitney, 907–586–7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Federal regulations at 50 CFR part 679 implement the FMP and govern the groundfish fisheries in the BSAI. The Council prepared the FMP, and NMFS approved it, under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. General regulations governing U.S. fisheries also appear at 50 CFR part 600.

The FMP and its implementing regulations require NMFS, after consultation with the Council, to specify annually an overfishing limit (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), and total allowable catch (TAC) for each target species category. The sum of TACs for all groundfish species in the BSAI must be within the optimum yield (OY) range of 1.4 million to 2.0 million metric tons (mt) (§ 679.20(a)(1)(i)(A) and 679.20(a)(2)). Section 679.20(c)(1) further requires that NMFS publish proposed harvest specifications in the **Federal Register** and solicit public comments on proposed annual TACs for each target species and apportionments thereof; prohibited species catch (PSC) allowances; prohibited species quota (PSQ) reserves established by § 679.21; seasonal allowances of pollock, Pacific cod, and Atka mackerel TAC; American Fisheries Act (AFA) allocations; Amendment 80 allocations; Community Development Quota (CDQ) reserve amounts established by § 679.20(b)(1)(ii); and ABC surpluses and reserves for CDQ groups and Amendment 80 cooperatives for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole. The proposed harvest specifications set forth in tables 1 through 15 of this action satisfy these requirements.

Under § 679.20(c)(3), NMFS will publish the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications after (1) considering comments received within the comment period (see **DATES**), (2) consulting with the Council at its December 2025 meeting, (3) considering information presented in the 2026 SIR to the Final EIS that assesses the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS (see **ADDRESSES**), and (4) considering information presented in the final 2024 SAFE report, including the Ecosystem Status Reports (ESR) for both the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands.