

communication, and budget. The Committee will also work on its initial observations, findings, and recommendations for the 2025 VCAT Annual Report. The agenda is subject to change if needed to accommodate Committee business. The final agenda will be posted on the NIST website at <https://www.nist.gov/director/vcat/agenda-minutes>.

Individuals and representatives of organizations who would like to offer comments and suggestions related to the Committee's business are invited to request a place on the agenda by no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Tuesday, February 3, 2026, by contacting Stephanie Shaw at stephanie.shaw@nist.gov. Approximately one-half hour will be reserved for public comments, and speaking times will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. The amount of time per speaker will be determined by the number of requests received but is likely to be about 3 minutes each. The exact time and date for public comments will be included in the final agenda that will be posted on the NIST website at <https://www.nist.gov/director/vcat/agenda-minutes>. Questions from the public will not be considered during this period. Speakers who wish to expand upon their oral statements, those who had wished to speak but could not be accommodated on the agenda, and those who were unable to attend in person are invited to submit written statements to Stephanie Shaw at stephanie.shaw@nist.gov.

All participants, including NIST staff, will be attending via a virtual meeting platform and must contact Ms. Shaw at stephanie.shaw@nist.gov by 5:00 p.m. eastern time, Wednesday January 28, 2026, for detailed instructions on how to join the meeting via a virtual meeting platform.

Alicia Chambers,

NIST Executive Secretariat.

[FR Doc. 2026-00355 Filed 1-9-26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-13-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF404]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries Off West Coast States; Pacific Highly Migratory Species; Notice

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

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; permit application period opening.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the opening of the 2026 permit application period for initial issuance of limited entry deep-set buoy gear permits under qualification Tier 9. Authorized through implementation of Amendment 6 to the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species and its implementing regulations, Tier 9 was established as the final tier in a ranking system for issuance of limited entry deep-set buoy gear permits. Tier 9 permits for deep-set buoy gear will be available through the National Permits System.

DATES: The 2026 application period for initial issuance of deep-set buoy gear permits issued under Tier 9 is February 1 to March 31, 2026.

ADDRESSES:

Electronic Access

This notice is accessible via the internet at the Office of the Federal Register website at <https://www.federalregister.gov>. Background information on Amendment 6 to the HMS FMP and supporting documents are available at the NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region website: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/west-coast>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Karen Palmigiano, West Coast Region Permits and Monitoring Branch wcr-permits@noaa.gov or (562) 980-4238.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) and its implementing regulations at title 50 in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 660, subpart K, regulate commercial and recreational fishing for HMS in the U.S. exclusive economic zone off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California and in adjacent high seas waters. NMFS published Amendment 6 and its implementing regulations on May 8, 2023 (88 FR 29545). Amendment 6 authorizes deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) as an additional gear type for catching swordfish and other HMS in Federal waters off of California and Oregon. The Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended that NOAA Fisheries authorize DSBG as an additional commercial gear type to improve the economic viability of the West Coast-based swordfish fishery while minimizing bycatch to the extent

practicable. The regulations also established a limited entry (LE) regime for "phased-in" permitting of DSBG fishing within Federal waters of the Southern California Bight (see 50 CFR 660.707(g)). Tier 9 is the final phase of that LE permit regime.

Tier 9 Permits

As required by the regulations at § 660.707(g)(12), once the list of initial approved qualifiers for Tiers 1 through 8 was exhausted in 2024, NMFS began accepting applications under Tier 9 in Spring 2025. NMFS will continue to accept new applications for Tier 9 permits on an annual basis and issue up to 25 permits per year until a total of 300 LE DSBG permits are issued, unless NMFS determines that the maximum number of permits should be fewer than 300 and publishes a subsequent rulemaking. Additionally, as required by regulations, NMFS must annually announce the opening of Tier 9 in the **Federal Register**. This notice serves as that announcement.

Therefore, beginning on February 1, 2026, and ending on March 31, 2026, NMFS will accept new applications for initial issuance of LE DSBG permits under Tier 9. Applicants for Tier 9 permits who submitted applications in previous years and have yet to receive a permit do not need to resubmit their applications. To qualify for a LE DSBG permit under Tier 9 an applicant must be a "person" as defined at § 660.702 and must not already own a LE DSBG permit either individually or as a shareholder in a business which owns a LE DSBG permit. The process for initial issuance of LE DSBG permits to applicants that qualify under Tier 9, which can be found in § 660.707(g)(12), is summarized below.

To apply for a LE DSBG permit under Tier 9, a person must submit a complete application to NMFS through the National Permits System website no later than 11:59 p.m. Pacific daylight time on March 31, 2026. A complete initial issuance application package consists of the following: a completed initial issuance application form, which may include ownership interest for businesses, and as required under § 660.707(g)(3)(ii); a current copy of the United States Coast Guard Documentation Form or state registration form for the vessel that will be registered to the permit; and payment of required fees. NMFS may require additional documentation as it deems necessary to make a determination on the application. The initial issuance application package will be considered incomplete until the required information is submitted. NMFS will

decline to act on an incomplete application.

NMFS will issue LE DSBG permits to approved applicants under Tier 9 on a first come, first served basis, according to the date and time that their application was submitted through the National Permits System. NMFS will issue up to 25 permits each year. If NMFS approves more than 25 applications in a single year, the approved applicants above 25 will receive priority for permit issuance the following year according to the date and time that their complete applications were received.

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

Dated: January 8, 2026.

Kelly Denit,

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

[FR Doc. 2026-00356 Filed 1-9-26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF469]

North Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of hybrid conference; meetings of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and its advisory committees.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and its advisory committees will meet February 2, 2026, through February 11, 2026.

DATES: The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will begin at 8 a.m. on Monday, February 2, 2026, and continue through Wednesday, February 4, 2026. The Council's Advisory Panel (AP) will begin at 8 a.m. on Monday, February 2, 2026, and continue through Saturday, February 7, 2026. The Council will begin at 8 a.m. on Thursday, February 5, 2026, and continue through Wednesday, February 11, 2026. All listed times are Alaska Time.

ADDRESSES: The meetings will be a hybrid conference. The in-person component of the meeting will be held at the Egan Center, 555 W 5th Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501, or join the meeting online through the links at <https://www.npfmc.org/current-or-next-council-meeting>.

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Diana Evans, Council staff; email: devans@npfmc.org; telephone: (907) 271-2809. For technical support please contact our Council administrative staff, email: support@npfmc.org.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Agenda

*Monday, February 2, 2026, Through
Wednesday, February 4, 2026*

The SSC agenda will include the following issues:

- (1) Administrative Issues
- (2) Review Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Pacific Cod Assessment, Recommend Over Fishing Limit (OFL)/Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)/Total Allowable Catch (TAC)
- (3) Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) Report on National Prioritization (Council reviewed in December 2025)
- (4) Planning for 2026 Groundfish Stock Assessment Cycle
- (5) Review Cook Inlet Salmon Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report, Recommend Over Fishing Limit (OFL)/Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)/Total Allowable Catch (TAC)
- (6) Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) 5-Year Review Workplan (Council reviewed in December 2025)
- (7) Progress on Developing Alternative Harvest Control Rules (HCRs)—Review Workshop, Plan Team Reports

The agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3117> prior to the meeting, along with meeting materials.

In addition to providing ongoing scientific advice for fishery management decisions, the SSC functions as the Council's primary peer review panel for scientific information, as described by the Magnuson-Stevens Act section 302(g)(1)(e), and the National Standard 2 guidelines (July 19, 2013, 78 FR 43066). The peer-review process is also deemed to satisfy the requirements of the Information Quality Act, including the OMB Peer Review Bulletin guidelines.

*Monday, February 2, 2026, Through
Saturday, February 7, 2026*

The Advisory Panel agenda will include the following issues:

- (1) Administrative Issues
- (2) Chum Salmon Bycatch—Final action
- (3) Staff Tasking

*Thursday, February 5, 2026, Through
Wednesday, February 11, 2026*

The Council agenda will include the following issues. The Council may take appropriate action on any of the issues identified.

- (1) Administrative Issues
- (2) Reports: Executive Director, NMFS Management Report, NOAA General Counsel (GC), Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), United States Coast Guard (USCG), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), North Pacific Research Board (NPRB), Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Report, Advisory Panel (AP) Report
- (3) GOA Pacific cod—Review Assessment, Recommend OFL/ABC/TAC
- (4) Chum Salmon Bycatch—Final action
- (5) Cook Inlet Salmon—Review Assessments and Analysis, Recommend OFL/ABC/TAC
- (6) Staff Tasking

The agenda is subject to change, and the latest version will be posted at <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3116> prior to the meeting, along with meeting materials.

Connection Information

You can attend the meeting online using a computer, tablet, or smart phone; or by phone only. Connection information will be posted online at: <https://www.npfmc.org/upcoming-council-meetings>. For technical support please contact our administrative staff, email: support@npfmc.org.

Public Comment

Public comment letters will be accepted and should be submitted electronically through the links at <https://www.npfmc.org/current-or-next-council-meeting/>. The Council strongly encourages written public comment for this meeting, to avoid any potential for technical difficulties to compromise oral testimony. The written comment period is open from December 12, 2025, and closes at 12 p.m. Alaska Time on Friday, January 30, 2026.

Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before this group for discussion, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Actions will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice