

June 4, 2026, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

**Alicia Chambers,**

*NIST Executive Secretariat.*

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**BILLING CODE P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF620]

#### Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meeting

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

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Tilefish Advisory Panel will hold a public meeting.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 16, 2026, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. EST. For agenda details, see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held via webinar. Webinar connection, agenda items, and any additional information will be available at <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events>.

*Council address:* Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331; <https://www.mafmc.org>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, telephone: (302) 526-5255.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The purpose of this meeting is to discuss recent performance of the blue and golden tilefish commercial and recreational fisheries and develop Fishery Performance Reports. These reports will be considered by the Scientific and Statistical Committee, the Monitoring Committee, and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council when setting 2027-2029 blue and golden tilefish catch and landings limits as well as commercial or recreational management measures.

#### Special Accommodations

The meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Shelley Spedden at the Council Office,

(302) 526-5251, at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: March 31, 2026.

**Rey Israel Marquez,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF562]

#### Whaling Provisions; Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Quotas

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

**ACTION:** Notice; notification of quota for bowhead whales.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS notifies the public of the aboriginal subsistence whaling quota for bowhead whales assigned to the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC), and of limitations on the use of the quota deriving from regulations of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). For 2026, the AEWC quota is 93 bowhead whales struck. This quota and other applicable limitations govern the harvest of bowhead whales by licensed whaling captains of the AEWC.

**DATES:** Applicable April 2, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Madison Harris, (202) 480-4592.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Aboriginal subsistence whaling (ASW) in the United States is governed by the Whaling Convention Act (WCA; 16 U.S.C. 916 *et seq.*). Under the WCA, IWC regulations shall become effective with respect to all persons and vessels subject to the jurisdiction of the United States within 90 days of notification from the IWC Secretariat of an amendment to the IWC Schedule (16 U.S.C. 916k). Regulations that implement the WCA, found at 50 CFR part 230, require the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries to publish, at least annually, aboriginal subsistence whaling quotas and any other limitations on aboriginal subsistence whaling deriving from regulations of the IWC.

At the 69th meeting of the IWC in 2024, the Commission extended existing ASW strike/catch limits, including those for the bowhead whales from the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock, for the 6-year period 2026-2031. The new IWC quota block maintains that the number of bowhead whales struck each year shall not exceed 67, with the total quota block for the 6-year period at 336 bowhead whales landed. Unused strikes from the three prior quota blocks shall be carried forward and added to the annual strike quota of subsequent years, provided that no more than 50 percent of the annual strike limit is added to the strike quota for any 1 year. For the 2026 harvest, there are 33 strikes available for carry-forward, so the combined bowhead whale strike quota set by the IWC for 2026 is 100 (67 + 33).

The extension of existing ASW strike/catch limits at the 2024 meeting of the IWC was carried out following a process agreed to by the Commission in 2018 that would extend ASW strike/catch limits under certain circumstances.

Under this process, commencing in 2026, bowhead whale strike/catch limits shall be extended every 6 years provided: (a) the IWC Scientific Committee advises in 2024, and every 6 years thereafter, that such limits will not harm the stock; (b) the IWC does not receive a request from the United States or the Russian Federation for a change in the bowhead whale catch limits based on need; and (c) the IWC determines that the United States and the Russian Federation have complied with the IWC's approved timeline and that the information provided represents a status quo continuation of the hunts. In 2024, the Commission reviewed the above ASW extension criteria and determined by consensus that all of the conditions had been met, and thus extended the ASW strike/catch limits for 6 years, for the period from 2026 through 2031.

Both Alaska and Russian Natives hunt the bowhead whale, thus the IWC quota for the bowhead whale is shared between the two Native groups. To account for the shared quota, the United States and Russia have an understanding that the two countries share the bowhead whale quota. To facilitate the management of the bowhead quota, NOAA entered into a cooperative agreement with the AEWC. NOAA has assigned 93 strikes to the AEWC through its cooperative agreement with the AEWC, accounting for bowhead whales that may be hunted by Russian Natives. The AEWC will in turn allocate these strikes among the 11 villages whose cultural and subsistence needs have been documented and will

ensure that AEWC whaling captains use no more than 93 strikes.

**Other Limitations**

The IWC regulations, as well as the NOAA regulation at 50 CFR 230.4(c), forbid the taking of calves or any whale accompanied by a calf.

NOAA regulations (50 CFR 230.4) also contain other prohibitions relating to aboriginal subsistence whaling, some of which are summarized here:

- No person, other than licensed whaling captains or crew under the control of those captains, shall engage in aboriginal subsistence whaling;
- No whaling captain shall engage in whaling that is not in accordance with the regulations of the IWC, NOAA, and the relevant cooperative agreement;
- No whaling captain shall engage in whaling without an adequate crew or without adequate supplies and equipment;
- No person may receive money for participating in the hunt;
- No person may sell or offer for sale whale products from whales taken in the hunt, except for authentic articles of Native handicrafts;
- Captains cannot continue to whale after the relevant quota is reached, after the season has been closed, or if their licenses have been suspended; and
- No captain shall engage in whaling in a wasteful manner.

Dated: March 30, 2026.  
**Alexa Cole,**  
*Director, Office of International Affairs,  
 Trade, and Commerce, National Marine  
 Fisheries Service.*  
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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XF643]

**Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions;  
 General Provisions for Domestic  
 Fisheries; Application for Exempted  
 Fishing Permits**

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

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

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The EFP would allow federally permitted fishing vessels to fish outside fishery regulations in support of exempted fishing activities proposed by the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation. Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery

Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before April 17, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit written comments by email: *nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov*. Include in the subject line “Increasing Trip Limits to Promote Full Utilization of the Skate Wing Fishery.” All comments received are a part of the public record and may be posted for public viewing without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “anonymous” as the signature if you wish to remain anonymous).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ashley Trudeau, Fishery Resource Management Specialist, *ashley.trudeau@noaa.gov*, (978) 281-9252.

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

TABLE 1—REQUESTED EXEMPTIONS

CFR citation	Regulation	Need for exemption
50 CFR 648.322 (b)(1)(i) .....	Skate wing possession and landing limits, vessels fishing under an Atlantic sea scallop, northeast multispecies, or monkfish day at sea.	To exceed the skate wing fishery trip limit of 4,000 pounds (lb; 1.8 metric tons (mt)) of skate wings (9,080 lb (4.1 mt) whole weight) in Season 1, and 6,000 lb (2.7 mt) of skate wings (13,620 lb (6.2 mt) whole weight) in Season 2.

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

Project title .....	Increasing Trip Limits to Promote Full Utilization of the Skate Wing Fishery.
Project start .....	05/01/2026.
Project end .....	04/30/2027.
Project objectives .....	To quantify the economic and ecological benefits and consequences of an increased skate wing trip limit.
Project location .....	Statistical areas 521, 526, and 537.
Number of vessels .....	17.
Number of trips .....	650.
Trip duration (days) .....	1.
Total number of days .....	650.
Gear type(s) .....	Gillnet.
Number of tows or sets .....	Within regulated gillnet set limits.
Duration of tows or sets .....	1–3 days.