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PUBLIC NOTICE

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PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY **Limited Entry Fixed Gear Sablefish Permit Stacking Program Review**

NOAA Fisheries and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) are responsible for the conservation and management of fisheries in federal waters (3-200 nm offshore) off the U.S. West Coast. Together, they are conducting a review of the Pacific Coast limited entry fixed gear sablefish permit stacking program. At its November meeting, the Council plans to address the list of potential action items (program changes) that will be considered during the review process and is seeking public comment on changes that should be covered.

Need for a Program Review

Twelve years have elapsed since implementation of the Sablefish Permit Stacking Program, a type of individual fishing quota (IFQ) program. A review would evaluate whether the program is functioning as originally intended and whether it has met the goals and objectives of Amendment 14 to the Pacific coast groundfish fishery management plan (FMP), the overall FMP, and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). In addition, a review would also identify any potential modifications or improvements to the program. A program review is consistent with the requirements in 303A of the MSA, to have periodic reviews of limited access privilege programs (LAPPs).

Program Review Process

This program review was first discussed by the Council at its September 12-17, 2013 meeting in Boise, Idaho. At this meeting, the Council adopted a calendar for the program review, please see page 3 of the Council Meeting Decision Summary Document for more information:

<http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/0913decisions.pdf>.

For its November 1-6 meeting in Costa Mesa, California, the Council is seeking public comment on the issues that may be considered as part of the program review process. Comments on potential changes to the permit stacking program should be provided by midnight October 9th to be included in the briefing book materials provided in advance of the November Council meeting and by midnight October 21st to be included in the supplemental materials provided at the meeting.

Over the 2013-2014 winter, NOAA Fisheries and Council staff will draft program review documents for the Council's April 5-10, 2014 meeting in Vancouver, Washington.

Potential Issues for Inclusion in the Review

Some of the issues we are considering for inclusion in the review document are given below. We welcome comments on these and additional issues:

- Are the primary ports for sablefish landings (both primary season landings and landings made in the daily trip limit (DTL) fishery) providing benefits to the same fishing communities that benefitted before the program was implemented, or to different fishing communities?
- How much permit stacking is occurring overall? By port? By vessel?
- Is there still a reason to hold an April-October primary season, or could it occur year-round, like the DTL fishery?
- Can we improve catch accounting between the sablefish primary fishery and the limited entry sablefish DTL fishery, and for the different permit tiers, by moving to an electronic fish ticket system?

- How can this program meet the MSA requirement for cost recovery?
- What fishery-entry costs affect people who want to participate in the fishery?
- Are the limits on the number of permits that may be owned and/or held by an individual or entity still useful? Should it be changed?
- Is the owner-on-board requirement still useful? Should it be changed?
- How do this program's regulations interact with the regulations that affect the rationalized groundfish trawl fishery? For example, how well do the two programs work to integrate requirements for catch accounting, observer monitoring, and registering more than one permit to a vessel?

Note: the Council has already taken action on trawl rationalization, so any review of the trawl rationalization regulations will focus only on how they interact with limited entry fixed gear sablefish regulations.

If you are interested in reading more about this program review, briefing book documents from the September 2013 Council meeting may be found at the following website under "Agenda Item G.2: Sablefish Permit Stacking Program Review":
<http://www.pcouncil.org/resources/archives/briefing-books/september-2013-briefing-book/#groundfishSeptember2013>

Questions or comments regarding this public notice and/or the program review may be directed to:

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NMFS Fisheries Management Website

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/management/fisheries_management.html

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