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FISHERIES**

National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region

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PUBLIC NOTICE

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PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY

Trawl Rationalization Program: 2014 Year-End and Gearing Up for 2015

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reminds the fishing industry of several changes to the groundfish fishery’s trawl rationalization program, a catch share program, as we approach 2015. The categories are:

1. Fishing into the new year
2. Cost Recovery – 2015 fee %, adjustment, MS pricing, MS Coop Annual Report
3. Interim allocations
4. Adaptive Management Program (AMP) in 2015 and beyond
5. Quota pound (QP) transfers allowed year round
6. Quota share (QS) transfers
7. Midwater trawl chafing gear changes
8. Upcoming actions

Regulations and compliance guides, along with other useful information, including applications and the 2015 interim IFQ allocations and vessel limits, are posted on the NMFS Trawl Program website (listed in the box).

Fishing into the New Year

If you are planning to fish during the last days of December 2014 and wait to offload until the first days of 2015, the discards and landings will be

debited against your 2015 vessel account, even if the discards and target species harvests actually occurred in 2014. The offload date as reported on the electronic fish ticket determines the year in which the vessel account is debited.

Cost Recovery for 2015

A cost recovery program was implemented for the Pacific coast groundfish trawl rationalization program in January 2014. The fee percentages by sector for 2015 are on file with the *Federal Register* and will publish on December 30, 2014.

IFQ Account Website

<https://www.webapps.nwfsc.noaa.gov/ifq/>

NMFS Trawl Program Website

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish_catch_shares/index.html

Cost Recovery Website

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish_catch_shares/rules_regulations/costrecovery.html



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For 2015, the fee percentages by sector are:

- **3.0 %** for the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program,
- **1.2 %** for the Mothership (MS) Coop Program
- **0.0 %** for the Catcher/Processor (C/P) Coop Program

NMFS also announces the MS pricing to be used by the C/P Coop Program to determine their fee amount due. The “MS pricing” is the MS Coop Program’s average price per pound and is used as a proxy for the C/P Coop Program. For 2015, the MS pricing is \$ 0.13/lb for Pacific whiting.

Yearly Adjustment

Due to fluctuations in actual ex-vessel values and amounts landed, the amount NMFS collects each year in cost recovery fees can be over or under NMFS’ costs from the previous fiscal year. The direct program costs (DPC) in the fee percentage calculation will be adjusted accordingly in the following year. In 2014, it is estimated that both the MS Coop and C/P Coop fisheries will have paid fees in an amount greater than the DPC incurred for the respective sectors in fiscal year 2013. As such, the 2015 DPC will be adjusted, downward as follows:

- MS (\$56,068.02)
- C/P (\$173,927.20)

The adjustment in the C/P Coop program costs results in a fee percentage of negative 0.1. Because a fee percentage cannot be negative, NMFS is setting the 2015 C/P Coop program cost recovery fee at 0.0 percent and will deduct an additional \$15,295.71 from the DPC used to calculate the 2016 fee percentage.

MS Coop Program Annual Report

NMFS would like to remind fish buyers in the MS Coop Program that their MS Coop Program Annual Report is due no later than March 31, 2015, as per regulations at 660.113(c)(5). The report should include information on operations over 2014. A link to the report form is available on the cost recovery website at:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish_catch_shares/rules_regulations/costrecovery.html

NMFS Annual Report

A NMFS annual report providing additional information on cost recovery will be available at the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s (Council’s) April 2015 meeting. The report will include information on fees collected over 2014 and on the fee percentage calculation for 2015, including further details on program costs, ex-vessel value by sector, and the MS pricing calculation.

Interim Allocations

To start off 2015, the Shorebased IFQ Program will be operating under interim allocations because the 2015 groundfish harvest specifications will not yet be in place. The harvest specifications are expected to be in place beginning in March 2015. Once the final harvest specifications are announced in the Federal Register, NMFS will issue additional QP to QS accounts. Interim 2015 allocations have been posted on the online IFQ system website (listed in the box) and in QS accounts. Updated vessel limits based on the interim 2015 allocations will also be available at the start of the year on the online IFQ system website and NMFS Trawl Program website under the “Vessel Accounts” link.

The table below is provided for planning purposes and shows estimated allocations over the coming year:

Quota Pound Allocation to QS Account	Estimated Date
Interim allocation	January 1
Additional allocation when 2015-2016 groundfish harvest specifications final rule publishes, potentially includes surplus carryover	March
Additional Pacific halibut allocation when the IPHC sets 2015 TAC	March
Additional Pacific whiting allocation when the 2015 TAC is set	May
Possible tribal reapportionment of Pacific whiting	Fall

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AMP in 2015 and beyond

The 10 percent of non-whiting QS reserved for the AMP, that has not yet been established, will continue to be ‘passed through’ to the fishery, as announced in a final rule dated December 17, 2014 (79 FR 75070). This 10 percent will be issued to current QS holders in proportion to their non-whiting QS until implementation of appropriate AMP regulations, expected after the trawl program 5-year review.

QP transfers allowed year round

As a reminder, QP may be transferred between vessel accounts year round since 2013.

QS transfers

QS transfers for all species, except widow rockfish, began in January 2014. Any transfer of QS is a transfer of % from one QS permit owner to another QS permit owner via the online QS account system. As a reminder, QS (%) transfers may be made from January 1 – November 30th each year. QS transfers cannot be made from December 1- 31. Each QS permit owner’s QS balances as of December 1 will be their starting QS balances on January 1 in the following year. While QS transfers will be registered in the QS account in the current year, NMFS will not allocate QP based on the changed QS amounts until the start of the following year. At that time, QP will be allocated in a manner reflecting any changes to QS amounts.

QS transfers will be tracked for compliance with accumulation limits, also called QS control limits. The QS account system will prevent trades from occurring that would result in exceeding the QS ownership accumulation limits at the QS permit level. As always, it is ultimately up to the QS owner to be responsible for not exceeding QS control limits either by the individual QS permit or by any ownership or control interest a person has among multiple QS permits.

NMFS has developed a QS calculator tool to help QS permit owners and other interested participants calculate the relative amount of QPs for a specific amount of QS % based on the current year’s sector allocation. Be aware that the calculator reflects the sector allocation at the time of use and may be based

on an interim allocation. The calculator is available on the public IFQ website, <https://www.webapps.nwfsc.noaa.gov/ifq/>, by clicking on the “Quota Share Calculator” tab.

If you have any questions about the IFQ account system, including questions about QS accounts and QS trading, please contact the Fisheries Permit Office at 206-526-4353 or at kevin.ford@noaa.gov or sarah.towne@noaa.gov.

Midwater Trawl Chafing Gear Regulation Changes

NMFS published a final rule (79 FR 71340, 12/2/2014) modifying chafing gear restrictions for midwater trawl gear, effective January 1, 2015. The rule applies to all midwater trawl gear including Pacific whiting and non-whiting target fishing. Chafing or chafer panels are webbing or other material attached to a codend to minimize damage to the codend netting from wear caused by rubbing against the stern ramp and trawl alley during net retrieval and from contact with the ocean floor. For more details, see the final rule and small entity compliance guide, dated 12/4/2014, on NMFS West Coast Region [Groundfish Trawl Regulations & Compliance Guides webpage](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish_catch_shares/rules_regulations/trawl_regulations_compliance_guides.html) at: http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish_catch_shares/rules_regulations/trawl_regulations_compliance_guides.html

Upcoming Actions

NMFS is currently working on several rules affecting the trawl rationalization program over 2015, including:

- final rule on observer & catch monitor program
- proposed rule clarifying regulations for the midwater trawl fishery
- proposed rule to change the season start date for midwater trawl gear in Shorebased IFQ Program

NMFS will provide updates on rulemakings at Council meetings, will announce availability of rules and regulatory changes through public notices, and will maintain an updated NMFS website. In addition, the Council maintains a website tracking actions affecting the trawl program at: <http://www.pcouncil.org/groundfish/fishery-management-plan/trailing-actions/>