



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region  
7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115  
[www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/index.html](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/index.html)



## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

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NMFS-SEA-15-32  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 21, 2015

### **PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY**

#### ***Trawl Rationalization Program: 2015 Year-End and Gearing Up for 2016***

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reminds the fishing industry of several year-end items for the groundfish fishery's trawl rationalization program, a catch share program, as we approach 2016.

The items covered in this public notice are:

1. Individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishing into the new year
2. IFQ quota pound allocations
3. IFQ quota share percent transfers
4. IFQ vessel account reminders
5. 2016 trawl cost recovery fee percentage
6. 2015 rule changes summary
7. Important dates in 2016

Regulations and compliance guides, along with other useful information, including program applications and the [2016 interim IFQ allocations and vessel limits](#), are posted on the NMFS Trawl Catch Share Program website and IFQ Account Website (listed in the box to the right).

#### **Groundfish Email Group**

Subscribe to "wcgroundfish" at:

[http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/fishery\\_management/groundfish/public\\_notices/recent\\_public\\_notices.html](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/fishery_management/groundfish/public_notices/recent_public_notices.html)

by clicking "Subscribe to the Groundfish Email Group".

#### **IFQ Account Website (Quota Share and Vessel Accounts)**

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

#### **NMFS Trawl Catch Share Program Website**

[http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish\\_catch\\_shares/index.html](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/groundfish_catch_shares/index.html)

#### **Public Permit Website**

[https://www.webapps.nwfsc.noaa.gov/apex\\_ifq/f?p=112:23:8215931583576::NO:::](https://www.webapps.nwfsc.noaa.gov/apex_ifq/f?p=112:23:8215931583576::NO:::)

# National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region

## IFQ Fishing into the New Year

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If you are planning to fish during the last days of December 2015 and wait to offload until the first days of 2016, the discards and landings will be debited against your 2016 vessel account, even if the discards and target species harvests actually occurred in 2015. The offload date as reported on the electronic fish ticket determines the year in which the vessel account is debited.

## IFQ Quota Pound Allocations

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The harvest specifications are on a two-year management cycle (2015-2016, 2017-2018, etc.). The 2016 shorebased trawl sector allocations for most species have been available to view in the regulations since the 2015-2016 harvest specifications published in March 2015 [see the table at [50 CFR §660.140\(d\)\(1\)\(ii\)\(D\)](#) for shorebased trawl allocations].

NMFS will allocate 2016 quota pounds to your 2016 quota share accounts for viewing in late December 2015. On or about January 1, 2016, these pounds will become transferable to vessel accounts for fishing in 2016. You will need to login and transfer quota pounds to a vessel account. (If you have issues logging into your account, please contact Sarah Towne at 206-526-4140 or by email at [sarah.towne@noaa.gov](mailto:sarah.towne@noaa.gov)).

Pacific whiting & Pacific halibut quota pound allocations to quota share accounts	Estimated date of allocation
Interim allocation	January 1
Additional Pacific halibut allocation when the IPHC sets the 2016 TAC	March
Additional Pacific whiting allocation when the 2016 TAC is set	May
Possible tribal reapportionment of Pacific whiting	Fall

**Please note:** Pacific halibut and Pacific whiting are managed under international treaties. The allocations for Pacific halibut and Pacific whiting are decided annually by an international body, so the sector trawl allocations for those species are *interim amounts* until the U.S. harvest amount is announced in the *Federal Register*, usually in March and May respectively. You will receive additional quota pounds for those species at that time. There may also be a tribal reapportionment of Pacific whiting to the trawl sectors in the fall. Please see the above table for a summary of the 2016 Pacific whiting and Pacific halibut allocation timelines.

## IFQ Quota Share Percent Transfers

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Quota share percentages express ownership of a portion of the IFQ fishery's sector allocations. NMFS uses your start-of-year quota share percentages to determine how many quota pounds to allocate to your online quota share account during the year, so for example, if you hold 2% of an IFQ species at the start of the year, you will receive 2% of the quota pounds that are issued to the shorebased trawl sector for that year.

In 2011, 138 original quota share permit owners were allocated quota share percentages, and in 2014 these share percentages became transferable for all IFQ species except widow rockfish (which is being reallocated). When you transfer quota share percentages, you are permanently transferring a percentage of your ongoing allocation for that species. By contrast, when you transfer quota pounds, you are only

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transferring the use of that pound for the current year.

Quota share percent transfers must be made in your online quota share account between January 1 and November 30 each year. Please note that even if you sell some of your quota share percentages in a given year, you will still continue to be allocated quota pounds for that species if any additional quota pound allocations are made during the year. For example, if you hold 5% of Pacific whiting on January 1, 2016, you will receive 5% of the sector's interim Pacific whiting quota pounds on or about January 1. If you sell all of your 5% Pacific whiting quota shares to another quota share permit owner on February 1, you will still receive 5% of the Pacific whiting top-off pounds in May, and 5% of any tribal whiting reapportionment that may be made in the fall. Only in 2017 would the permit owner you sold the 5% Pacific whiting to receive any Pacific whiting quota pounds from the percentage they purchased.

Quota share transfers are tracked for compliance with accumulation limits, also called control limits. These accumulation limits are listed in the regulations at [50 CFR 660.140 \(d\)\(4\)\(i\)\(C\)](#) and posted on the NMFS trawl catch share program website (link in box above). The IFQ account system will prevent quota share trades from occurring that would result in exceeding the accumulation limits at any level of ownership. But as always, it is ultimately the responsibility of the quota share permit owner to research and prevent any excess quota share or individual bycatch quota holdings, and to submit updated ownership interest forms.

### **IFQ Vessel Account Reminders**

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Please remember that you cannot fish in the IFQ fishery without a valid, renewed, 2016 vessel account. A large number of vessel account owners did *not* renew their vessel account for 2016. Everyone who successfully renewed their vessel account online by the November 30, 2015 deadline received an approved renewal receipt by mail. Everyone who did not renew their vessel account online by the November 30, 2015 deadline received a letter in the mail reminding them they could not fish in the IFQ fishery on January 1, 2016 without a renewed vessel account. NMFS also included a vessel account renewal form and trawl identification of ownership interest form with the notification letter, which are the two forms that must be submitted to NMFS in order to renew a vessel account outside of the online renewal period. If you are unsure whether your vessel account is renewed, please contact Sarah Towne at 206-526-4140 or by email at [sarah.towne@noaa.gov](mailto:sarah.towne@noaa.gov).

In addition to renewals, NMFS would like to send out a few basic vessel account reminders:

- If the ownership of your vessel changes, you must request a new vessel account.
- You cannot fish in the IFQ fishery if your vessel account has a deficit for any IFQ species. All vessel owners/captains should check their vessel account balance before every IFQ trip. If vessel owners are hesitant to give the captain your login credentials, any person can check vessel balances at any time (including deficits) by visiting the public [IFQ website](#) (link also listed in box above), clicking on "Vessel Account Balance" and searching for a vessel. Check the "QP Balance" column for deficits. You can click on the "QP Balance" column header to sort balances by available quota pounds to easily see deficits.
- Vessels on IFQ trips may only fish in *one* IFQ management area per trip. A list of [IFQ species and management areas](#) can be found on the NMFS Trawl Catch Share Program website (listed in the box above).
- IFQ vessels must have an observer aboard *unless you are operating under* an electronic monitoring exempted fishing permit (EFP), and must land, to a first receiver, with a valid first



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- Process for Divestiture of Excess Quota Shares in the IFQ Fishery  
Effective: November 4, 2015

NMFS announced that the Process for Divestiture Final Rule was effective, November 4, 2015, and published in the Federal Register on November 9, 2015. This final rule makes narrow procedural additions to regulations to clarify how divestiture and revocation of excess quota share will occur. The rule:

1. Clarified the revocation protocols for cases where quota share permit owners do not voluntarily divest of quota share holdings in excess of the control limits by the divestiture deadline.
2. Added an option where quota share permit owners who exceed the aggregate nonwhiting control limit can abandon excess quota share to NMFS by November 15, 2015.
3. Established procedures if divestiture becomes necessary in 2016 and beyond.

All quota share permit owners divested of excess quota share by the November 2015 deadline and no quota share was abandoned to NMFS.

The final rule is available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/11/09/2015-28412/fisheries-offwest-coast-states-pacific-coast-groundfish-fishery-process-for-divestiture-of-excess>.

- Midwater Trawl Requirements Effective: January 13, 2016

NMFS published a final rule on December 11, 2015, that clarifies the regulatory requirements for vessels using midwater trawl gear in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Shorebased IFQ Program. The action was taken to eliminate inconsistencies and reduce confusion in the current regulations. For vessels targeting Pacific whiting, the action clarifies that the retention of prohibited and protected species is allowed until landing. The disposition of prohibited and protected species is specified consistent with the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan, the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan, and other applicable law.

The final rule is available at [www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/frn/groundfish\\_frn.htm](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/frn/groundfish_frn.htm)

### Important Dates in 2016

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#### Future Council Meetings:

**March 9-12 Sacramento, California**  
Advisory Bodies may begin Tue, March 8  
Council Session begins Wed, March 9

**June 23-28 Tacoma, Washington**  
Advisory Bodies may begin Wed, June 22  
Council Session begins Thurs, June 23

**April 9-14 Vancouver, Washington**  
Advisory Bodies may begin Fri, April 8  
Council Session begins Sat, April 9

**September 15-20 Boise, Idaho**  
Advisory Bodies may begin Wed, Sept 14  
Council Session begin Thurs, Sept 15

## National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region

**November 16-21 Garden Grove, CA**

Advisory Bodies may begin Tue, Nov 15

Council Session begins Wed, Nov 16

### **Important Dates for the Shorebased IFQ Sector:**

- 2016 Quota Pound Allocations to Quota Share Accounts: **January 1**
- Quota Share Percentage Trading: **January 1 – November 30**
- Pacific Halibut Quota Pounds Top-Off to Quota Share Accounts: **March**
- Pacific Whiting Quota Pounds Top-Off to Quota Share Accounts: **May**
- Surplus Carryover to Vessel Accounts: **Spring**
- First Receiver Site License Re-Registration Period: **February 1 – April 15**
- Possible Tribal Whiting Reapportionment to Quota Share Accounts: **Fall**
- IFQ Renewal Period (Quota Share Permit and Vessel Accounts): **October 1 – November 30**

### **Important Dates for All Trawl Sectors:**

- MS and C/P Cooperative Permit Application Period: **February 1 – March 31**
- Possible Tribal Whiting Reapportionment to Trawl Sectors: **Fall**
- Economic Data Collection (EDC) Forms Due: **September 1**
- MS/CV Endorsement and Catch History Assignment Transfer Period: **September 1 – December 31** (best to submit by November 30 so that the change will be registered to your LEP when we print your renewed permit for January 1)
- Limited Entry Permit Renewal Period (Trawl-Endorsed, C/P-Endorsed, MS/CV-Endorsed, MS Permits): **October 1 to November 30**

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For more information contact: NMFS West Coast Region at 206-526-6140 or visit our website at <http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov>, click on “Fisheries” then “Groundfish”; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at 360-249-4628; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at 541-867-4741; or the California Department of Fish and Game at 707-441-5797 (Eureka), 510-581-7358 (Belmont), 562-342-7184 (Los Alamitos).

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Any discrepancies between this public notice and the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.