



**NOAA
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: 2016 Year-End and Gearing Up for 2017

As we approach 2017, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) wants to remind the fishing industry of several year-end items for the groundfish fishery's trawl rationalization program.

The items covered in this public notice are:

1. Individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishing into the new year
2. IFQ quota pound (QP) allocations
3. Widow Rockfish QS Reallocation
4. Permit Joint Registration
5. Elimination of Notary Requirement
6. IFQ vessel account reminders
7. EFPs

Regulations and compliance guides, along with other useful information, including program applications and the 2017 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

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

Public Permit Website

https://www.webapps.nwfsc.noaa.gov/apex_ifq/f?p=112:23:8215931583576::NO:::

IFQ Fishing into the New Year

If you are planning to fish during the last days of December 2016 and the offload is not completed until a 2017 date, the discards and landings will be debited against your 2017 vessel account, even if the discards and target species harvests actually occurred in 2016. The offload date as reported on the electronic fish ticket determines the year in which the vessel account is debited.

IFQ Quota Pound Allocations

To start 2017, the Shorebased IFQ Program will be operating under interim QP allocations because the 2017-2018 groundfish harvest specification regulations are not final. Tentatively, the harvest specifications are expected to be final mid-January 2017. Once the final harvest specifications are published, NMFS will issue remaining QP to QS accounts. NMFS will allocate 2017 quota pounds to your 2017 quota share accounts for viewing in late December 2016. To view these balances, log into your QS account, toggle the "Quota Year" to 2017, and press "Go". On or about January 1, 2017, these pounds will become transferable to vessel accounts for fishing in 2017. You will need to login and transfer quota pounds to a vessel account. If you have issues logging into your account, please contact the Permit Office (Kevin Ford or Justin Kavanaugh) at 206-526-4353.

	Estimated date of allocation
Interim QP allocation	January 1
Final QP allocation	February
Additional Pacific halibut allocation when the IPHC sets the 2017 TAC	March
Additional Pacific whiting allocation when the 2017 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. If applicable, 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 2017 Pacific whiting and Pacific halibut allocation timelines.

Widow Rockfish QS Reallocation Application Process

NMFS expects to publish the widow rockfish reallocation final rule in early January 2017. At that time, NMFS will mail to all current widow rockfish QS holders an application form and worksheet(s) (one for each trawl limited entry permit associated with the QS permit) providing the permit landing history during qualifying years. The application will require the applicant to either accept or not accept the amount of reallocated widow rockfish QS. If the applicant does not accept the amount of reallocated widow QS, they must identify the error in the calculation, and submit the disagreement in writing and provide any supporting documentation.

The deadline to submit the application will be given on the application form, but is anticipated to be sometime in late January. Failure to submit an application by the deadline date will result in the loss

of widow rockfish QS for that QS permit holder. It is highly encouraged that applications be submitted in a timely manner in order to avoid loss of QS. In the event that one or more applications are not received by the deadline, widow QS for that QS permit owner would be redistributed proportionately to all other QS permit holders who met the requirements. Once the NMFS decision has been made, there will be opportunity for appeals. NMFS will provide 30 days to file an appeal after issuance of the initial administrative determination. If there are no appeals, NMFS will allow for the transfer of widow QS approximately 2 weeks after the appeal deadline. NMFS will issue an additional public notice announcing the start date for transfers. If there are appeals, widow rockfish QS will not be transferrable until January 1, 2018.

Permit Joint Registration

NMFS published a final rule on November 23, 2016 which allows for the joint registration of both a trawl permit and limited entry fixed gear permits. Specifically, the following permits may be registered simultaneously to a single vessel:

- 1) A trawl endorsed limited entry permit and one non sablefish endorsed limited entry fixed gear permit; or
- 2) A trawl endorsed limited entry permit and up to 3 sablefish limited entry fixed gear permits.

The rule that allows for the change of vessel registration to occur at the start of cumulative limit period remains in place. Anyone seeking to register a vessel to a permit, should submit a transfer form prior to the start of the cumulative limit period they wish to participate in.

Elimination of Notary Requirement on Permit Forms

NMFS no longer requires notarization of the following forms:

- 1) Change in vessel registration and permit owner form;
- 2) Trawl ownership interest form; and
- 3) First Receiver Site License application form.

IFQ Vessel Account Reminders

Vessel owners who successfully renewed their vessel account online by the November 30, 2016 deadline received an approved renewal receipt by mail. Some vessel owners did not renew their vessel account for 2017. Please remember that you cannot fish in the IFQ fishery without a valid, renewed 2017 vessel account. If you are unsure whether your vessel account is renewed, please contact the Permits staff at 206-526-4353.

In addition to renewals, NMFS would like to provide 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.
- 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 receiver site license. You may check the list of licensed first receivers at any time by visiting the Public Permit Website (link listed in box above) and clicking on “First Receiver Site Licenses”.
- An updated shorebased IFQ vessel limits table has been posted on the NMFS Catch Share website.
- If a vessel owner or their representative identifies a discrepancy in their vessel account between catch monitor and first receiver data, please contact Lori Jesse, PSMFC Catch Monitor Program Coordinator at 503-595-3282 (ljesse@psmfc.org). Similarly, if the vessel owner/representative identifies a discrepancy in their vessel account involving their discard data, please contact Neil Riley, NMFS Observer Program, 206-861-7607. Also, you may call the Permit Office at 206-526-4353 regarding discrepancies in your vessel account.

Exempted Fishing Permits

Electronic Monitoring EFPs – At the request of the Pacific Fishery Management Council, NMFS is extending the EM EFPs through December 2018 to allow for additional data collection. Participating vessel owners will receive new EFPs in the mail in late December authorizing their continued participation through 2018. As NMFS has not yet published final EM regulations for whiting and fixed gear vessels that were set to take effect January 1, 2017, whiting and fixed gear vessels may also continue using their EFPs until the final EM regulations are published. New vessel owners interested in joining the EM EFP Program may apply by contacting the Permits Office at 206-526-4353.

Selective Flatfish Trawl EFP – NMFS is currently reviewing an application from the West Coast Seafood Processors Association, Environmental Defense Fund, the Oregon Trawl Commission, and Pacific Seafoods for an EFP Program that would exempt participating bottom trawl vessels from the requirement to use selective flatfish trawl inshore of the Rockfish Conservation Areas North of 40°10’N and the minimum mesh size to better target pelagic rockfish while collecting information about bycatch. NMFS anticipates issuing these EFPs, if approved, in late January. Vessel owners interested in participating in this EFP Program may obtain additional information by contacting the Permits Office at 206-526-4353.

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).

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