



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region
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www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/index.html



EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT ENROLLMENT NOTICE

For More Information Contact:

NMFS Permits Branch (206) 526-4140
Oregon Trawl Commission (541) 469-7830
Westcoast Seafood Processors (503) 227-5076
Midwater Trawlers Cooperative (541) 272-4544

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NMFS Seeks Pacific Coast Groundfish Vessels for Trawl Gear EFP in 2018

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) seeks federally licensed limited entry groundfish bottom trawl and midwater trawl vessels to participate in an EFP for 2018¹ which looks to collect information regarding if and how the removal of certain gear, time, and area restrictions for the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program would affect the nature and extent of salmon and eulachon bycatch. This EFP is intended to allow participating limited entry groundfish bottom trawl and midwater trawl vessels more flexibility in how they design and use their gear in 2018 to target pelagic rockfish species, such as widow, chilipepper, and yellowtail rockfish. This EFP would exempt participating vessels from federal regulations related to gear configurations, as well as times and areas fished. **Interested parties should contact the NMFS Permits Branch at (206) 526-4140 by November 30, 2017 to enroll, if eligible, or receive more information.**

Participating vessels may be provided exemptions regarding:

Mesh size: Vessels fishing on an EFP trip would be exempt from the minimum mesh requirements for bottom trawl gear of 4.5 inches and midwater trawl gear of 3 inches, as well as from the current “mesh size” definition, which defines mesh size as the opening between opposing knots. Instead mesh size would be defined as the opening between opposing knots or corners.

Selective Flatfish Trawl Gear: Vessels fishing on an EFP trip would be exempt from the requirement to use selective flatfish trawl gear while fishing north of 42° North latitude (N. lat.) and shoreward of the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA).² Instead vessels would be permitted to use any groundfish trawl gear that meets the definition of small footrope trawl gear, in this area. Additionally, vessels fishing on an EFP trip would be permitted to use both two- and four-seamed selective flatfish trawl nets with up to four-riblines, excluding the codend. Vessels would still be required to use selective flatfish trawl gear between 42° N. lat. and 40°10' N. lat. as is currently required in regulation.

¹ Even if a vessel participated in the 2017 trawl gear modification EFP, they are still required to register their interest in the 2018 trawl gear EFP.

² This exemption may be extended south to 40°10'N. lat. after NMFS and the Council consider the Preseason Salmon Forecast in early March 2018.

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Area Closures: Vessels fishing on an EFP trip would be permitted to fish inside the boundaries of the trawl RCA, both north and south of 40°10' N. lat., when fishing with midwater groundfish trawl gear only. Bottom trawl vessels would still be prohibited from fishing inside the boundaries of the trawl RCA coast-wide.

Time Closures: Vessels fishing on an EFP trip using midwater groundfish trawl gear to target non-whiting species would be permitted to fish north and south of 40°10' N. lat. in all open areas (*see* Area Closures) for the effective dates of the EFP. These vessels would no longer be constrained to the Primary whiting season for the IFQ fishery.

Fishing Before Previous Catch is Stowed: Vessels fishing on an EFP trip would be exempt from the prohibition on bringing a new haul onboard before the previous haul has been stowed, as well as the requirement to stow all catch from a haul before the next haul is brought aboard.

Multiple Gears Onboard: Vessels fishing on an EFP trip would be exempt from the prohibition on having both groundfish bottom trawl gear and midwater trawl gear onboard simultaneously north and south of 40°10' N. lat. Vessels would be required to make declarations each time they change gears, but would be exempt from the need to return to port to do so. All non-prohibited and non-protected species catch on vessels fishing under this EFP and with multiple trawl gears onboard must be landed separately by gear type.

Prohibited and Protected Species³: Vessels fishing on an EFP trip would be required to use either electronic monitoring (under the Electronic Monitoring EFP) or observers on 100 percent of EFP trips. Vessels using electronic monitoring would be required to retain all salmon and eulachon caught on an EFP trip, sorted and landed by haul. All other protected and prohibited species would still be required to be discarded under the conditions of the current regulations and the electronic monitoring EFP.

Minimizing Bycatch of Protected and Prohibited Species:

The EFP would include a number of measures to minimize potential bycatch of protected and prohibited species, particularly Chinook salmon, which may result from this EFP. Some measures include:

- Additional reporting and monitoring requirements:
 - including filing a declaration before each EFP trip, and when a vessel changes gears on the same EFP trip, with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement;
 - filling out all required logbooks; and
 - 100-percent at-sea monitoring using observers or electronic monitoring.
- Additional requirements for sorting and handling of catch, such as sorting and reporting of any salmon and eulachon catch at the haul level and keeping all other catch sorted and landed by gear type.
- Mandatory participation in a collective bycatch avoidance agreement with other participating vessels.

³ This exemptions applies only to salmon and eulachon. Any incidentally caught marine mammal, seabird, sea turtle, other Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish, large pelagic fish (6-feet or greater in length), Dungeness crab caught seaward of Washington or Oregon, or Pacific halibut must be discarded according to the Vessel Monitoring Plan and recorded in the vessel's logbook.

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- A requirement to work with Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and the applicants to provide real-time, or near real-time, information on salmon bycatch and to respond to the information compiled by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to avoid high bycatch areas.
- Overall salmon bycatch harvest guidelines and sub-harvest guidelines that vessels would be required to operate under.
- Maintaining certain closed areas, such as the Klamath River Conservation Zone and Columbia River Conservation Zone.

Eligibility to Participate in this EFP:

To be eligible to participate in this EFP, interested applicants must meet the following criteria on an ongoing basis. All vessels, owners, and captains, would be subject to a review of sanction history through the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement to determine if they meet the eligibility criteria. Specific eligibility criteria would be waived on a case-by-case basis.

- Have a valid Pacific Coast Groundfish trawl limited entry permit
- Have a valid vessel account set up to receive quota pounds under the Shorebased IFQ program
- Have a current and valid U.S. Coast Guard Vessel Safety Check decal
- Cannot have had a violation for falsification of observer, logbook, or fish ticket data
- Cannot have had a violation of fishing regulations in the last 3 years in which the participant was fined more than \$1,000 for a criminal penalty or \$5,000 for a civil penalty

Participation Limit:

Due to the need to reduce potential impacts on prohibited and protected species, particularly in the area south of 42° N. lat., NMFS may limit participation in this EFP by time and/or area. To assist NMFS in determining where impacts may take place, vessels that would like to, and are eligible to participate, must notify NMFS of their interest in participating as well as the location they intend to fish (i.e. north of 42° N. lat or south of 42° N. lat.). All vessels that intend to fish south of 42° N. lat. while on an EFP trip would be subject to the sub-harvest guideline of 80 Chinook salmon for the duration of the EFP while fishing in this area.

To register your interest in participating in this EFP, please contact the NMFS Permits Branch at (206) 526-4140 by November 30, 2017.

For more information about the NMFS West Coast Region visit our website at <http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov>.
