



**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**

For Information Contact:  
Karen Palmigiano (206) 526-4491

NMFS-SEA-18-24  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DECEMBER 3, 2018

### **Final Rule for Trawl Gear Changes Effective January 1, 2019**

NMFS announces a final rule that revises and eliminates restrictions on the use and configuration of groundfish bottom and midwater trawl gear for vessels fishing in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Trawl Rationalization Program. This rule is effective January 1, 2019.

NMFS and the Pacific Fishery Management Council worked closely over the past few years to develop this action to increase flexibility in how groundfish trawl vessels operate and configure their nets. Flexibility in vessel operations will support safety at sea (reduced crossings), reduce days at sea, and increase efficiency of fishing operations.

This action:

- Adjusts restrictions related to how nets are configured, including eliminating minimum mesh size restrictions, changing the definition of mesh size, removing chafing gear placement restrictions, and removing restrictions on using double-walled codends from groundfish bottom and midwater trawl vessels fishing under the Trawl Rationalization Program;
- Removes the requirement to use selective flatfish trawl gear north of 42° N. lat. and shoreward of the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area;
- Adjusts provisions related to vessel operations on a single fishing trip, including allowing vessels that fish in the Shorebased IFQ Program under the Trawl Rationalization Program to carry and fish groundfish bottom and midwater trawl gears on the same trip, fish across IFQ management lines, and bring a new haul on deck before the catch from a previous haul is stowed.

We will provide a compliance guide for groundfish bottom and midwater trawl vessels on the NMFS West Coast Region website before January 1, 2019.

To view or download the final rule, please visit the NMFS West Coast Region website at:  
[http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/frn/groundfish\\_frns.html](http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/frn/groundfish_frns.html)