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PUBLIC NOTICE

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PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY

Year-End Information for the Trawl Rationalization Program:

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Moratorium on QP Transfers

From December 15 (12:00 am) through December 31, 2011, QP or IBQ pounds will not be transferable between vessel accounts. Any pending transfers that have not been accepted by the receiving vessel account as of December 15 (12:00 am) will be retracted and credited to the originating vessel account.

NMFS recommends that vessels planning to fish during the moratorium on QP transfers acquire sufficient QPs in the vessel account to cover any landings before the start of the transfer moratorium. If a deficit is incurred in a vessel account between December 15 – 31, 2011, the earliest the deficit can be cured is January 1, 2012. Vessels with a vessel account in deficit for any IFQ species cannot fish in the IFQ fishery until the deficit is cured.

Observer Discard Data

In order to prevent deficits in a 2011 vessel account during the QP transfer moratorium period, NMFS will not debit observer discard data from December 10-December 31, 2011. Any observer discard data that is submitted during this time will be debited against the 2011 vessel account no earlier than January 1, 2012.

2011 observer data is scheduled to be final in the first quarter of 2012. Any late debits that cause a deficit in the 2011 vessel account will be transferred to the 2012 vessel account and must be covered by QP issued in 2012.

For more information on the observer program or discard estimates, please call the NWFSC observer program at (206) 861-7601.

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

IFQ Website Temporary Unavailability

NMFS expects to shut down the IFQ website for several hours on December 31, 2011 to refresh for the opening of 2012 accounts. Please prepare to have limited access from December 31, 2011 until service is restored.

2012 Account Information

NMFS will activate 2012 QS and vessel accounts on or about January 1, 2012. QS accounts will be populated with an initial allocation of QP based on the QS percent on the QS permit.

Vessel accounts will start 2012 with zero QP, except for accounts which ended 2011 in a deficit. 2011 deficits will appear in the 2012 account, and must be cured with QP issued in 2012.

Landings and discard data for 2011 fishing trips may continue to be debited or changed in 2012 until data is final. Any vessel that landed IFQ fish in 2011, regardless of if they plan to fish in 2012, should continue to monitor their vessel account in 2012 until landings and discard data are final.

2012 QS Permit and Vessel Account Renewals

Congratulations to QS permit owners for renewing all QS permits and accounts by the deadline date! NMFS will mail QS permits in mid-December, 2011.

Any vessel account that was not renewed by November 30, 2011, will not be activated for 2012, and the vessel cannot fish in the IFQ fishery in 2012 until the account is renewed. The vessel account will also not be eligible for any surplus carryover of 2011 QP or IBQ pounds.

NMFS will not accept any 2012 vessel account renewals from December 1-December 31, 2011. In January 2012, any vessel account that was not renewed during the renewal period for 2012 can renew their account by calling the Fisheries Permit Office to request a paper renewal form.

Change in Ownership of Vessels Participating in the IFQ Fishery

As a reminder, any time a vessel participating in the IFQ fishery changes ownership, the new vessel owner must request from NMFS a new vessel account, and include an ownership interest form.

Once the new vessel account is established by NMFS, the vessel owner must provide to the observer, catch monitor, and processor the new vessel account number during transactions. The owner of the limited entry trawl permit which is registered to the vessel must submit a change in vessel owner form and provide a copy of the vessel documentation (USCG or state) to reflect the new ownership.

Also, the new vessel owner cannot fish using a vessel account established under the prior owner's name. The vessel account under the previous owner's name will remain open until the landing/discard data is final for that year, but the vessel account will not be renewed in the following year.

2012 Shorebased IFQ Program Allocation

The initial 2012 Shorebased IFQ Program allocations will be announced in mid-December 2011. NMFS will issue QP based on these Shorebased IFQ Program allocations. All species allocations except for Pacific whiting and Pacific halibut will be final. In the spring of 2012 after final harvest specifications are available for Pacific whiting and Pacific halibut, NMFS will revise QS accounts if necessary.

2012 allocations and the corresponding vessel limits (daily and annual) will be posted on NMFS's website in mid-December, 2011 (<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Groundfish-Halibut/Groundfish-Fishery-Management/Trawl-Program/index.cfm>).

2012 Lingcod Will Not Be Split

NMFS will not implement separate management areas and allocations for lingcod in the IFQ fishery in 2012. The 2011-2012 groundfish harvest specifications set separate harvest limits for lingcod north and south of 42° N. lat. However, NMFS will continue to manage lingcod in the Shorebased IFQ Program as a single species coastwide for 2012.

2011 Surplus Carryover Information

In February or March of 2012, NMFS will make a decision on the specifics of the 2011 surplus carryover.

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

Public View of IFQ Account Balances

On December 1, 2011, NMFS will provide a public view of all QS and vessel account balances on the IFQ website (<https://www.webapps.nwfsc.noaa.gov/ifq/>).

OLE Declarations Reminder

As a reminder, it is important for all vessels to make sure their current declaration with NMFS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) is accurate. The vessel operator must send a new declaration report to OLE before leaving port on a trip in which a gear type that is different from the gear type most recently declared for the vessel will be used. A declaration report will be valid until another declaration report revising the existing gear declaration is received by NMFS OLE.

For more information on declaration reports or to make a declaration, please call NMFS OLE at 206-526-6133.

Further Changes for 2012 to be Announced Soon

The Trawl Rationalization Program's "Program Improvement and Enhancement," or PIE, final rule will publish December 1, 2011 and will be effective January 1, 2012. The rule includes, but is not limited to: revisions to the Pacific halibut trawl bycatch mortality limit; clarification that Amendment 21 supersedes limited entry/open access allocations for certain groundfish species; revisions to the observer coverage requirement while a vessel is in port and before the offload is complete; revisions to the electronic fish ticket reporting requirements; revisions to the first receiver site license requirement; further clarification on moving between limited entry and open access fisheries; a process for end-of-the-year vessel account reconciliation; and an exemption from processing at sea for qualified participants in the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program. Changes for 2012 as a result of this rule will be announced soon through a separate public notice.

NMFS Trawl Program website:

<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Groundfish-Halibut/Groundfish-Fishery-Management/Trawl-Program/index.cfm>

Pacific Coast Groundfish IFQ website (account login):

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

Groundfish Email Group:

Subscribe to be sent public notices by email. Visit the following website and click "sign up":

<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Groundfish-Halibut/Groundfish-Fishery-Management/Public-Notices/Index.cfm>