



NMFS-SEA-17-07  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## PUBLIC NOTICE

For Information Contact: -  
Groundfish Permits Branch (206) 526-4353 -  
Oregon Trawl Commission (541) 469-7830 -

### NMFS Seeks Additional Pacific Coast Groundfish Vessels for Trawl Gear Exempted Fishing Permit Project

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) seeks federally licensed limited entry bottom trawl vessels to participate in the ongoing *Monitoring and Minimizing Salmon Bycatch when Targeting Rockfish in the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Fishery Study*. To participate in this project as a new entrant, please submit your request no later than **April 25, 2017**. **Note that this will be the last opportunity to enroll in this EFP for 2017.**

This study is testing a fishery for chilipepper, widow, and yellowtail rockfishes north of 42° N latitude while exempting participating vessels from two separate gear requirements:

- (1) **Selective Flatfish Trawl** - Currently, regulations at 50 CFR 660.130(b)(3)(ii)(A) require limited entry bottom trawl vessels to use a selective flatfish trawl when fishing shoreward of the Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) north of 40° 10' N latitude. Vessels would still be required to use a small footrope trawl as is required at § 660.130(b)(3)(ii). This exemption applies to EFP trips north of 42° N lat. only.
- (2) **Minimum Mesh Size** - Currently, regulations at § 660.130(b)(2) require limited entry bottom trawl vessels to use a 4.5 inch (11.7 cm) mesh throughout the length of the trawl net. This exemption applies to EFP trips north of 42° N lat. only.

The objective of the EFP is to provide flexibility in the configuration and use of bottom trawl gear for participating vessels, as well as information on potential impacts to protected resources, particularly Chinook salmon bycatch, that may result. Information from the EFP would be used to enhance the management of the groundfish fishery and promote the objectives of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

NMFS is seeking additional vessels to participate in the EFP project for the 2017 fishing year. There are currently 32 vessels that have received EFPs for this project, but only 10 trips have been taken as of April 3rd. NMFS expects expanding the number of participating vessels would result in a greater number of EFP fishing trips and a more robust data set for analysis. NMFS does not plan to take on more duties with an expanded EFP because the harvest guidelines are monitored fleet-wide.

## What You Need to Know

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

- Limits on areas and times during which EFP fishing can takeplace. This EFP pertains to groundfish bottom trawl trips north of 42° N latitude.
- Filing a declaration with the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement for an EFP trip.
- Submission of logbooks for each EFP trip within 24 hours of landing.
- 100 percent at-sea observer coverage or electronic monitoring (EM) for EFP trips.
- Additional requirements for sorting and handling of bycatch.
  - Vessels participating in the bottom trawl EM EFP in conjunction with this EFP must retain all salmon and eulachon for documentation by a Catch Monitor. Salmon, eulachon, and green sturgeon must be reported in the bottom trawl logbook.
- Harvest guidelines for Chinook salmon bycatch.
  - A total harvest guideline of 3,547 Chinook (EFP and non-EFP) for 2017.
  - No more than 800 Chinook from March - May.
  - Area-specific rates will be used to track salmon bycatch distribution within the EFP.
  - Weekly monitoring reports and bi-monthly meetings with EFP sponsors to allow for close monitoring of bycatch and inseason management.
- Submission of reports on gear configuration and characteristics, including net dimensions, bycatch reduction devices, and modifications to gear as the fishing season progresses.
- Participation in a collective bycatch avoidance program with other participating vessels, including submitting High Bycatch Tow Reports when salmon are caught.
  - To facilitate communication between EFP holders about bycatch avoidance, the EFP holder authorizes NMFS and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to release catch information to the staff of the West Coast Seafood Processors Association and the Oregon Trawl Commission for purposes of monitoring EFP performance and communicating information on bycatch and avoidance measures to other EFP holders.

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

- The participant owns the vessel proposed to be used or has written permission of the owner;
- The participant's vessel is registered to a valid trawl Pacific Coast Groundfish limited entry permit and a valid vessel account set up to receive quota pounds under the IFQ program;
- The participant has prior experience fishing in the IFQ program;
- The vessel has a current and valid U.S. Coast Guard Vessel Safety Check decal;
- The participant has not 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;
- The participant has never had a violation for falsification of observer, logbook, or fish ticket data;
- The vessel has had no unobserved fishing trips or fishing days since the inception of the IFQ program;

- The participant is willing and able to follow the terms and conditions of the EFP, including the associated individual vessel monitoring plan.

**To learn more or to apply to participate in the project, contact the West Coast Region's Groundfish Permits Branch at (206)526-4353 or the Oregon Trawl Commission at (541)469-7830.**

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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"

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