



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region

7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115

www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/index.html



PUBLIC NOTICE

For Information Contact:
Groundfish Branch (206) 526-6140
Fisheries Permit Office (206) 526-4353

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PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY

Trawl Rationalization Program: 2017 Year-End and Gearing Up for 2018

As we approach 2018, 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. Interim Widow Rockfish QP allocation
5. IFQ vessel account reminders
6. 2018 QS Permits

Regulations and compliance guides, along with other useful information, including program applications 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 2017 and the offload is not completed until a 2018 date, the discards and landings will be debited against your 2018 vessel account, even if the discards and target species harvests actually occurred in 2017. The offload date as reported on the electronic fish ticket determines the year in which the vessel account is debited.

IFQ Quota Pound Allocations

NMFS will allocate quota pounds to your 2018 quota share accounts for viewing in late December 2017. Once available, you may view these balances, by logging into your QS account and changing the "Quota Year" to 2018. On or about January 1, 2018, these pounds will become transferable to vessel accounts for fishing in 2018. 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.

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 table for a summary of the 2018 Pacific whiting and Pacific halibut allocation timelines.

	Estimated date of allocation
QP allocation for all IFQ species. Widow Rockfish interim allocation based on low-end QS figure	January 1
Final Widow Rockfish QP allocation in QS accounts	Late January
Additional Pacific halibut allocation when the IPHC sets the 2018 TAC	March
Additional Pacific whiting allocation when the 2018 TAC is set	May

Widow Rockfish QS Reallocation Application Process

NMFS published the widow rockfish reallocation final rule on November 24, 2017. NMFS mailed (certified) 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 requires the applicant to either accept or not accept the amount of reallocated widow rockfish QS and sign/date. 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.

A complete, certified application must be either postmarked or hand-delivered within normal business hours to NMFS, West Coast Region, Permits Office, Bldg. 1, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE., Seattle, WA 98115, **no later than Tuesday, December 26, 2017**. NMFS will not accept or review any applications received or postmarked after the application deadline. There are no hardship exemptions for this deadline.

NMFS will not accept emailed applications.

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.

NMFS will provide 60 days to file an appeal 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, 2019.

Interim Allocation of Widow Rockfish Quota Pounds to Quota Share Accounts

Because NMFS will not complete the review and final determinations for the reallocation of widow rockfish quota share by January 1, 2018, it will need to make interim allocations of widow rockfish quota pounds to quota share accounts to start 2018. NMFS will allocate interim widow rockfish quota pounds in the following manner: 1) for those QS permit holders who stand to receive an increase in their reallocated widow rockfish QS amount, widow quota pounds will be issued based on their current (as of December 1, 2017) widow rockfish QS; and 2) for those QS permit holders who stand to receive a decreased or unchanged amount of widow rockfish QS under the reallocation, quota pounds will be issued on their reallocated widow rockfish QS figure. Once all applications have been reviewed and determination letters have been mailed (assuming no corrections are requested by applicants), NMFS will top off QS accounts with quota pounds based on their reallocated widow rockfish QS amount. In addition, widow rockfish adaptive management program QPs will be allocated to all widow rockfish QS holders proportionately at the time of reallocation.

IFQ Vessel Account Reminders

Vessel owners who successfully renewed their vessel account online by the November 30, 2017 deadline were sent an approved renewal receipt by mail. Some vessel owners did not renew their vessel account for 2018. Please remember that you cannot fish in the IFQ fishery without a valid, renewed 2018 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 will be 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.

2018 Quota Share Permits

2018 Quota Share Permits will be mailed mid-December. The permit will reflect your QS balances for all IFQ and IBQ species as of December 1, 2017. As the deadline to apply for reallocated widow QS is December 26, initial 2018 QS permits will not reflect reallocated widow rockfish quota shares. NMFS will issue new QS permits in 2018 with reallocated widow rockfish amounts.

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*.