



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 140918791-4999-02]

RIN 0648-XD516

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Gulf of Alaska; Final 2015 and 2016 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule; harvest specifications and closures.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications, apportionments, and Pacific halibut prohibited species catch limits for the groundfish fishery of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for groundfish during the 2015 and 2016 fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the GOA. The intended effect of this action is to conserve and manage the groundfish resources in the GOA in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

DATES: Harvest specifications and closures are effective at 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Electronic copies of the Final Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Record of Decision (ROD), and the Supplementary

Information Report (SIR) to the EIS prepared for this action are available from <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov>. The final 2014 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report for the groundfish resources of the GOA, dated November 2014, is available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at 605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306, Anchorage, AK 99510-2252, phone 907-271-2809, or from the Council's Web site at <http://www.npfmc.org>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Obren Davis, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the GOA groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone of the GOA under the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP). The Council prepared the FMP under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.* Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the FMP appear at 50 CFR parts 600, 679, and 680.

The FMP and its implementing regulations require NMFS, after consultation with the Council, to specify the total allowable catch (TAC) for each target species, the sum of which must be within the optimum yield (OY) range of 116,000 to 800,000 metric tons (mt). Section 679.20(c)(1) further requires NMFS to publish and solicit public comment on proposed annual TACs, Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, and seasonal allowances of pollock and Pacific cod. Upon consideration of public comment received under § 679.20(c)(1), NMFS must publish notice of final harvest specifications for up to two fishing years as annual target TAC, per § 679.20(c)(3)(ii). The final harvest specifications set forth in Tables 1 through 36 of this document reflect the outcome of this process, as required at § 679.20(c).

The proposed 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA and Pacific halibut PSC limits were published in the Federal Register on December 8, 2014 (79 FR 72593). Comments were invited and accepted through January 7, 2015. NMFS did not receive any comments on the proposed harvest specifications. In December 2014, NMFS consulted with the Council regarding the 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications. After considering public testimony, as well as biological and economic data that were available at the Council's December 2014 meeting, NMFS is implementing the final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications, as recommended by the Council. For 2015, the sum of the TAC amounts is 536,158 mt. For 2016, the sum of the TAC amounts is 590,161 mt.

Other Actions Affecting the 2015 and 2016 Harvest Specifications

Amendment 97 to the FMP: Chinook Salmon Prohibited Species Catch Limits in the Non-Pollock Trawl Groundfish Fisheries

In June 2013, the Council took final action to implement measures to control Chinook salmon PSC in all non-pollock trawl groundfish fisheries in the Western and Central GOA. This action, Amendment 97 to the FMP, would set an initial annual PSC limit of 7,500 Chinook salmon apportioned among the sectors of trawl catcher/processors, trawl catcher vessels participating in the Central GOA Rockfish Program, and trawl catcher vessels not participating in the Central GOA Rockfish Program fishing for groundfish species other than pollock. The pollock directed fishery is not included in the Council's recommended action, as that fishery is already subject to Chinook salmon PSC limits (§ 679.21(h)).

NMFS published a notice of availability for Amendment 97 on June 5, 2014 (79 FR 32525). On September 3, 2014, the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) approved Amendment 97. The proposed rule that would implement Amendment 97 published on June 25, 2014 (79 FR

35971), with public comments accepted through July 25, 2014. The proposed rule contains a description of the affected management areas and groundfish fisheries, the non-pollock trawl groundfish fisheries and associated sectors, the history and goals of Amendment 97, and the provisions of the proposed action. Those provisions include proposed Chinook salmon PSC limits by sector, seasonal allocations, and other aspects associated with the implementation of Chinook salmon PSC limits for the non-pollock trawl groundfish fisheries in the Western and Central GOA. One provision that could affect the 2016 Chinook salmon PSC limits is the “incentive buffer.” This mechanism provides for an increased annual Chinook salmon PSC limit if sectors catch less than their limit of Chinook salmon in the previous year. The final rule to implement Amendment 97 published on December 2, 2014 (79 FR 71350). The Chinook salmon PSC limits implemented by Amendment 97 were effective on January 1, 2015. Specific sector limits for the non-pollock groundfish fisheries are described later in this preamble. NMFS will monitor the Chinook salmon PSC in the non-pollock GOA groundfish fisheries and close an applicable sector if it reaches its 2015 Chinook salmon PSC limit.

Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) and TAC Specifications

In December 2014, the Council, its Advisory Panel (AP), and its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the most recent biological and harvest information about the condition of groundfish stocks in the GOA. This information was compiled by the Council’s GOA Groundfish Plan Team and was presented in the draft 2014 SAFE report for the GOA groundfish fisheries, dated November 2014 (see ADDRESSES). The SAFE report contains a review of the latest scientific analyses and estimates of each species’ biomass and other biological parameters, as well as summaries of the available information on the GOA ecosystem and the economic condition of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska. From these data and

analyses, the Plan Team estimates an overfishing level (OFL) and ABC for each species or species group. The 2014 report was made available for public review during the public comment period for the proposed harvest specifications.

In previous years, the largest changes from the proposed to the final harvest specifications have been based on recent NMFS stock surveys, which provide updated estimates of stock biomass and spatial distribution, and changes to the models used for producing stock assessments. At the November 2014 Plan Team meeting, NMFS scientists presented updated and new survey results, changes to stock assessment models, and accompanying stock assessment estimates for all groundfish species and species groups that are included in the final 2014 SAFE report. The SSC reviewed this information at the December 2014 Council meeting. Changes from the proposed to the final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications are discussed below.

The final 2015 and 2016 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are based on the best available biological and socioeconomic information, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised methods used to calculate stock biomass. The FMP specifies the formulas, or tiers, to be used to compute OFLs and ABCs. The formulas applicable to a particular stock or stock complex are determined by the level of reliable information available to fisheries scientists. This information is categorized into a successive series of six tiers to define OFL and ABC amounts, with Tier 1 representing the highest level of information quality available and Tier 6 representing the lowest level of information quality available. The Plan Team used the FMP tier structure to calculate OFL and ABC amounts for each groundfish species. The SSC adopted the final 2015 and 2016 OFLs and ABCs recommended by the Plan Team for all groundfish species. The Council adopted the SSC's OFL

and ABC recommendations and the AP's TAC recommendations. The final TAC recommendations were based on the ABCs as adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations, including maintaining the sum of all TACs within the required OY range of 116,000 to 800,000 mt.

The Council recommended 2015 and 2016 TACs that are equal to ABCs for sablefish, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, shortraker rockfish, dusky rockfish, rougheyeye rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, thornyhead rockfish, "other rockfish," big skates, longnose skates, other skates, sculpins, sharks, squids, and octopuses in the GOA. The Council recommended TACs for 2015 and 2016 that are less than the ABCs for pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish in the Western GOA, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole in the Western and Central GOA, "other rockfish" in the Southeast Outside district, and Atka mackerel. The Pacific cod TACs are set to accommodate the State's guideline harvest levels (GHLs) for Pacific cod so that the ABCs are not exceeded. The shallow-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, and flathead sole TACs are set to allow for increased harvest opportunities for these target species while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other, more fully utilized fisheries. The "other rockfish" TAC in the Southeast Outside District (SEO) is set to reduce the amount of discards. The Atka mackerel TAC is set to accommodate incidental catch amounts in other fisheries.

The final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications approved by the Secretary are unchanged from those recommended by the Council and are consistent with the preferred harvest strategy alternative in the EIS (see ADDRESSES). NMFS finds that the Council's recommended OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of the groundfish stocks as described in the final 2014 SAFE report. NMFS also finds that the Council's recommendations

for OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations, including maintaining the total TAC within the OY range. NMFS reviewed the Council's recommended TAC specifications and apportionments, and approves these harvest specifications under 50 CFR 679.20(c)(3)(ii). The apportionment of TAC amounts among gear types and sectors, processing sectors, and seasons is discussed below.

Tables 1 and 2 list the final 2015 and 2016 OFLs, ABCs, TACs, and area apportionments of groundfish in the GOA. The sums of the 2015 and 2016 ABCs are 685,597 mt and 731,049 mt, respectively, which are higher in 2015 and 2016 than the 2014 ABC sum of 640,675 mt (79 FR 12890, March 6, 2014).

Specification and Apportionment of TAC Amounts

NMFS' apportionment of groundfish species is based on the distribution of biomass among the regulatory areas over which NMFS manages the species. Additional regulations govern the apportionment of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish. Additional detail on the apportionment of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish are described below.

The ABC for the pollock stock in the combined Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas (W/C/WYK) includes the amount for the GHL established by the State for the Prince William Sound (PWS) pollock fishery. The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council recommended that the sum of all State and Federal water pollock removals from the GOA not exceed ABC recommendations. Based on genetic studies, fisheries scientists believe that the pollock in PWS is not a separate stock from the combined W/C/WYK population. Since 1996, the Plan Team has had a protocol of recommending that the GHL amount be deducted from the GOA-wide ABC. For 2015 and 2016, the SSC recommended and the Council approved the

W/C/WYK pollock ABC including the amount to account for the State's PWS GHLL. At the November 2014 Plan Team meeting, State fisheries managers recommended setting the PWS GHLL at 2.5 percent of the annual W/C/WYK pollock ABC. For 2015, this yields a PWS pollock GHLL of 4,783 mt, an increase of 620 mt from the 2014 PWS GHLL of 4,163 mt. For 2016, the PWS pollock GHLL is 6,271 mt, an increase of 2,108 mt from the 2014 PWS pollock GHLL.

The Council also adopted the SSC's recommendation to revise the terminology used when apportioning pollock in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas. The SSC recommended describing apportionments of pollock to the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas as "apportionments of annual catch limit (ACLs)" rather than "ABCs." The SSC annually recommends a combined pollock ABC for the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas based on factors such as scientific uncertainty in the estimate of the area-wide OFL, data uncertainty, and recruitment variability. Section 3.2.3.3.2 of FMP specifies that the ACL is equal to the ABC. Historically, the SSC has recommended apportioning the combined Western, Central, and West Yakutat ABC between these three individual Regulatory Areas. However, the subarea ABCs have not been based on scientific uncertainty in the OFL, data uncertainty, or other conservation or biological concerns, but rather on seasonal and spatial apportionment procedures established under the Steller sea lion protection measures for pollock TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas. The SSC noted that describing subarea apportionments as "apportionments of the ACL" more accurately reflects that such apportionments address management, rather than biological or conservation, concerns. In addition, apportioning the ACL in this manner allow NMFS to balance any transfer of TAC from one area to another pursuant to regulations at § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B) to ensure that the area-wide ACL and ABC are not exceeded. The SSC noted that this terminology change is

acceptable for pollock in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas only. There is one aggregate pollock OFL in these areas, and Steller sea lion protection measures provide a spatial and seasonal apportionment procedure for the pollock TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas. This change is not applicable for pollock in the Southeast Outside GOA Regulatory Area, which is managed as a separate stock.

NMFS establishes pollock TACs in the Western, Central, West Yakutat Regulatory Areas, and the Southeast Outside District of the GOA (see Tables 1 and 2). NMFS also establishes seasonal apportionments of the annual pollock TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA among Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630. These apportionments are divided equally among each of the following four seasons: the A season (January 20 through March 10), the B season (March 10 through May 31), the C season (August 25 through October 1), and the D season (October 1 through November 1) (§ 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), and § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(A) and (B)). Additional detail is provided below; Tables 3 and 4 list these amounts.

The 2015 and 2016 Pacific cod TACs are set to accommodate the State's GHL for Pacific cod in State waters in the Central and Western Regulatory Areas, as well as in PWS. The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council recommended that the sum of all State and Federal water Pacific cod removals from the GOA not exceed ABC recommendations. Accordingly, the Council set the 2015 and 2016 Pacific cod TACs in the Eastern, Central, and Western Regulatory Areas to account for State GHLs. Therefore, the 2015 and 2016 Pacific cod TACs are less than the ABCs by the following amounts: 1) Eastern GOA, 707 mt; 2) Central GOA, 15,330 mt; and 3) Western GOA, 11,611 mt. These amounts reflect the sum of the State's 2015 and 2016 GHLs in these

areas, which are 25 percent of the Eastern and Central ABCs, and 30 percent of the Western GOA ABC.

NMFS establishes seasonal apportionments of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Central and Western Regulatory Areas. Sixty percent of the annual TAC is apportioned to the A season for hook-and-line, pot, and jig gear from January 1 through June 10, and for trawl gear from January 20 through June 10. Forty percent of the annual TAC is apportioned to the B season for hook-and-line, pot, and jig gear from September 1 through December 31, and for trawl gear from September 1 through November 1 (§§ 679.23(d)(3) and 679.20(a)(12)). The Central and Western GOA Pacific cod TACs are allocated among various gear and operational sectors. The Pacific cod sector apportionments are discussed in detail in a subsequent section of this preamble.

The Council's recommendation for sablefish area apportionments takes into account the prohibition on the use of trawl gear in the SEO District of the Eastern Regulatory Area and makes available 5 percent of the combined Eastern Regulatory Area ABCs to trawl gear for use as incidental catch in other groundfish fisheries in the WYK District (§ 679.20(a)(4)(i)). Tables 7 and 8 list the final 2015 and 2016 allocations of sablefish TAC to hook-and-line and trawl gear in the GOA.

Changes from the Proposed 2015 and 2016 Harvest Specifications in the GOA

In October 2014, the Council's recommendations for the proposed 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications (79 FR 72593, December 8, 2014) were based largely on information contained in the final 2013 SAFE report for the GOA groundfish fisheries, dated November 2013 (see ADDRESSES). The Council proposed that the final OFLs, ABCs, and TACs established for the 2015 groundfish fisheries (79 FR 12890, March 6, 2014) be used for the proposed 2015 and 2016

harvest specifications, pending completion and review of the 2014 SAFE report at its December 2014 meeting.

As described previously, the SSC adopted the final 2015 and 2016 OFLs and ABCs recommended by the Plan Team. The Council adopted the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations and the AP's TAC recommendations for 2015 and 2016. The final 2015 ABCs are higher than the proposed 2015 ABCs published in the proposed 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications (79 FR 72593, December 8, 2014) for pollock, Pacific cod, sablefish, shallow-water flatfish, deep-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Pacific ocean perch, dusky rockfish, longnose skate, and "other skates." The final 2015 ABCs are lower than the proposed 2015 ABCs for northern rockfish, rougheye rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, and big skates. The final 2016 ABCs are higher than the proposed 2016 ABCs for pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Pacific ocean perch, longnose skate, and "other skates." The final 2016 ABCs are lower than the proposed 2016 ABCs for deep-water flatfish, rex sole, arrowtooth flounder, northern rockfish, dusky rockfish, rougheye rockfish, and big skates. For the remaining target species—Atka mackerel, sculpins, sharks, squids, and octopus—the Council recommended, and the Secretary approved, the final 2015 and 2016 ABCs that are the same as the proposed 2015 and 2016 ABCs.

Additional information explaining the changes between the proposed and final ABCs is included in the final 2014 SAFE report, which was not available when the Council made its proposed ABC and TAC recommendations in October 2014. At that time, the most recent stock assessment information was contained in the final 2013 SAFE report. The final 2014 SAFE report contains the best and most recent scientific information on the condition of the groundfish stocks, as previously discussed in this preamble, and is available for review (see ADDRESSES).

The Council considered the final 2014 SAFE report in December 2014 when it made recommendations for the final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications. In the GOA, the total final 2015 TAC amount is 536,158 mt, an increase of 5 percent from the total proposed 2015 TAC amount of 511,599 mt. The total final 2016 TAC amount is 590,161 mt, an increase of 15 percent from the total proposed 2016 TAC amount of 511,599 mt. The following table in this preamble summarizes the principle reason for the difference between the proposed and final TACs.

Based on changes to the assessment method (model) used by stock assessment scientists, for 2015 and 2016 the greatest TAC increase is for Pacific cod. Based on changes in the estimates of overall biomass, the greatest TAC increases are for shallow-water flatfish, longnose skate, other skates, and Pacific ocean perch. Based upon changes in the estimates of biomass, the greatest decreases in TACs are for rougheye rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, and big skate. For all other species and species groups, changes from the proposed to the final TACs are within plus or minus five percent of the proposed TACs. These TAC changes correspond to associated changes in the ABCs and TACs, as recommended by the SSC, AP, and Council.

Additionally, based upon the Council's recommended changes in setting the TACs at amounts below ABCs, the greatest decreases in TACs are for shallow-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, and "other rockfish." The Council believed, and NMFS concurs, that setting TACs for the three preceding flatfish species equal to ABCs would not reflect anticipated harvest levels accurately, as the Council and NMFS expect halibut PSC limits to constrain these fisheries in 2015 and 2016.

Detailed information providing the basis for the changes described above is contained in the final 2014 SAFE report. The final TACs are based on the best scientific information

available. These TACs are specified in compliance with the harvest strategy described in the proposed and final rules for the 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications. The changes in TACs between the proposed rule and this final rule are compared in the following table.

Comparison of Proposed and Final 2015 and 2016 GOA Total Allowable Catch Limits (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentage.)

Species	2015 and 2016 Proposed TAC	2015 Final TAC	2015 Final minus 2015 Proposed TAC	Percentage difference	2016 Final TAC	2016 Final minus 2016 Proposed TAC	Percentage difference	Principle reason for difference
Pollock	193,809	199,151	5,342	3%	257,178	63,369	33%	Model ¹
Pacific cod	61,519	75,202	13,683	22%	75,202	13,683	22%	Model
Sablefish	9,554	10,522	968	10%	9,558	4	0%	N/A
Shallow-water flatfish	32,027	35,381	3,354	10%	32,877	850	3%	Biomass ²
Deep-water flatfish	13,303	13,334	31	0%	13,177	-126	-1%	Biomass
Rex sole	9,155	9,150	-5	0%	8,979	-176	-2%	Biomass
Arrowtooth flounder	103,300	103,300	0	0%	103,300	0	0%	N/A
Flathead sole	27,726	27,756	30	0%	27,759	33	0%	N/A
Pacific ocean perch	19,764	21,012	1,248	6%	21,436	1,672	8%	Biomass
Northern rockfish	5,010	4,998	-12	0%	4,721	-289	-6%	Biomass
Shortraker rockfish	1,323	1,323	0	0%	1,323	0	0%	N/A
Dusky rockfish	5,081	5,109	28	1%	4,711	-370	-7%	Biomass
Rougheye rockfish	1,262	1,122	-140	-11%	1,142	-120	-10%	Biomass
Demersal shelf rockfish	274	225	-49	-18%	225	-49	-18%	Biomass
Thornyhead rockfish	1,841	1,841	0	0%	1,841	0	0%	N/A
Other rockfish	1,811	1,811	0	0%	1,811	0	0%	N/A
Atka mackerel	2,000	2,000	0	0%	2,000	0	0%	N/A
Big skate	3,762	3,255	-507	-13%	3,255	-507	-13%	Biomass
Longnose skate	2,876	3,218	342	12%	3,218	342	12%	Biomass
Other skates	1,989	2,235	246	12%	2,235	246	12%	Biomass
Sculpins	5,569	5,569	0	0%	5,569	0	0%	N/A
Sharks	5,989	5,989	0	0%	5,989	0	0%	N/A
Squids	1,148	1,148	0	0%	1,148	0	0%	N/A
Octopuses	1,507	1,507	0	0%	1,507	0	0%	N/A
Total	511,599	536,158	24,559	5%	590,161	78,562	15%	

¹ Model – Change in assessment methodology

² Biomass – Change in estimate of biomass

The final 2015 and 2016 TAC recommendations for the GOA are within the OY range established for the GOA and do not exceed the ABC for any species or species group. Tables 1 and 2 list the final OFL, ABC, and TAC amounts for GOA groundfish for 2015 and 2016, respectively.

Table 1. Final 2015 ABCs, TACs, and OFLs of Groundfish for the Western/Central/West Yakutat, Western, Central, Eastern Regulatory Areas, and in the West Yakutat, Southeast Outside, and Gulfwide Districts of the Gulf of Alaska (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Species	Area ¹	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock ²	Shumagin (610)	n/a	31,634	31,634
	Chirikof (620)	n/a	97,579	97,579
	Kodiak (630)	n/a	52,594	52,594
	WYK (640)	n/a	4,719	4,719
	W/C/WYK (subtotal)	256,545	191,309	186,526
	SEO (650)	16,833	12,625	12,625
	Total	273,378	203,934	199,151
Pacific cod ³	W	n/a	38,702	27,091
	C	n/a	61,320	45,990
	E	n/a	2,828	2,121
	Total	140,300	102,850	75,202
Sablefish ⁴	W	n/a	1,474	1,474
	C	n/a	4,658	4,658
	WYK	n/a	1,708	1,708
	SEO	n/a	2,682	2,682
	E (WYK and SEO) (subtotal)	n/a	4,390	4,390
	Total	12,425	10,522	10,522
Shallow-water flatfish ⁵	W	n/a	22,074	13,250
	C	n/a	19,297	19,297
	WYK	n/a	2,209	2,209
	SEO	n/a	625	625
	Total	54,207	44,205	35,381
Deep-water flatfish ⁶	W	n/a	301	301
	C	n/a	3,689	3,689
	WYK	n/a	5,474	5,474
	SEO	n/a	3,870	3,870
	Total	15,993	13,334	13,334
Rex sole	W	n/a	1,258	1,258
	C	n/a	5,816	5,816
	WYK	n/a	772	772
	SEO	n/a	1,304	1,304
	Total	11,957	9,150	9,150
Arrowtooth flounder	W	n/a	30,752	14,500
	C	n/a	114,170	75,000
	WYK	n/a	36,771	6,900
	SEO	n/a	11,228	6,900
	Total	226,390,	192,921	103,300
Flathead sole	W	n/a	12,767	8,650
	C	n/a	24,876	15,400
	WYK	n/a	3,535	3,535

	SEO	n/a	171	171
	Total	50,792	41,349	27,756
Pacific ocean perch ⁷	W	n/a	2,302	2,302
	C	n/a	15,873	15,873
	WYK	n/a	2,014	2,014
	W/C/WYK subtotal	23,406	20,189	20,189
	SEO	954	823	823
	Total	24,360	21,012	21,012
	Northern rockfish ⁸	W	n/a	1,226
C		n/a	3,772	3,772
E		n/a	n/a	n/a
Total		5,961	4,998	4,998
Shortraker rockfish ⁹	W	n/a	92	92
	C	n/a	397	397
	E	n/a	834	834
	Total	1,764	1,323	1,323
Dusky rockfish ¹⁰	W	n/a	296	296
	C	n/a	3,336	3,336
	WYK	n/a	1,288	1,288
	SEO	n/a	189	189
	Total	6,246	5,109	5,109
Rougheye and Blackspotted rockfish ¹¹	W	n/a	115	115
	C	n/a	632	632
	E	n/a	375	375
	Total	1,345	1,122	1,122
Demersal shelf rockfish ¹²	SEO	361	225	225
Thornyhead rockfish	W	n/a	235	235
	C	n/a	875	875
	E	n/a	731	731
	Total	2,454	1,841	1,841
Other rockfish ^{13, 14}	W and C	n/a	1,031	1,031
	WYK	n/a	580	580
	SEO	n/a	2,469	200
	Total	5,347	4,080	1,811
Atka mackerel	GW	6,200	4,700	2,000
Big skate ¹⁵	W	n/a	731	731
	C	n/a	1,257	1,257
	E	n/a	1,267	1,267
	Total	4,340	3,255	3,255
Longnose skate ¹⁶	W	n/a	152	152
	C	n/a	2,090	2,090
	E	n/a	976	976

	Total	4,291	3,218	3,218
Other skates ¹⁷	GW	2,980	2,235	2,235
Sculpins	GW	7,448	5,569	5,569
Sharks	GW	7,986	5,989	5,989
Squids	GW	1,530	1,148	1,148
Octopus	GW	2,009	1,507	1,507
Total		870,064	685,597	536,158

¹ Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2. (W=Western Gulf of Alaska; C=Central Gulf of Alaska; E=Eastern Gulf of Alaska; WYK=West Yakutat District; SEO=Southeast Outside District; GW=Gulf-wide).

² The aggregate pollock ABC for the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas is apportioned among four statistical areas after deducting 2.5 percent of the ABC for the State's pollock GHL fishery. These apportionments are considered subarea ACLs, rather than ABCs, for specification and reapportionment purposes. The ACLs in Areas 610, 620, and 630 are further divided by season, as detailed in Table 3. In the West Yakutat and Southeast Outside Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.

³ The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned 60 percent to the A season and 40 percent to the B season in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA. Pacific cod in the Eastern Regulatory Area is allocated 90 percent for processing by the inshore component and 10 percent for processing by the offshore component. Table 5 lists the final 2015 Pacific cod seasonal apportionments.

⁴ Sablefish is allocated to trawl and hook-and-line gear in 2015. Table 7 lists the final 2015 allocations of sablefish TACs.

⁵ "Shallow-water flatfish" means flatfish not including "deep-water flatfish," flathead sole, rex sole, or arrowtooth flounder.

⁶ "Deep-water flatfish" means Dover sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, and deepsea sole.

⁷ "Pacific ocean perch" means Sebastes alutus.

⁸ "Northern rockfish" means Sebastes polyspinis. For management purposes the 2 mt apportionment of ABC to the WYK District of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska has been included in the other rockfish species group.

⁹ "Shortraker rockfish" means Sebastes borealis.

¹⁰ "Dusky rockfish" means Sebastes variabilis.

¹¹ "Rougheye rockfish" means Sebastes aleutianus (rougheye) and Sebastes melanostictus (blackspotted).

¹² "Demersal shelf rockfish" means Sebastes pinniger (canary), S. nebulosus (china), S. caurinus (copper), S. maliger (quillback), S. helvomaculatus (rosethorn), S. nigrocinctus (tiger), and S. ruberrimus (yelloweye).

¹³ "Other rockfish" means Sebastes aurora (aurora), S. melanostomus (blackgill), S. paucispinis (bocaccio), S. goodei (chilipepper), S. crameri (darkblotch), S. elongatus (greenstriped), S. variegatus (harlequin), S. wilsoni (pygmy), S. babcocki (redbanded), S. proriger (redstripe), S. zacentrus (sharpchin), S. jordani (shortbelly), S. brevispinis (silvergrey), S. diploproa (splitnose), S. saxicola (stripetail), S. miniatus (vermillion), S. reedi (yellowmouth), S. entomelas (widow), and S. flavidus (yellowtail). In the Eastern GOA only, other rockfish also includes northern rockfish, S. polyspinis.

¹⁴ "Other rockfish" in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas and in the West Yakutat District means other rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish. The "other rockfish" species group in the SEO District only includes other rockfish.

¹⁵ "Big skate" means Raja binoculata.

¹⁶ "Longnose skate" means Raja rhina.

¹⁷ "Other skates" means Bathyraja spp.

Table 2—Final 2016 ABCs, TACs, and OFLs of Groundfish for the Western/Central/West Yakutat, Western, Central, Eastern Regulatory Areas, and in the West Yakutat, Southeast Outside, and Gulfwide Districts of the Gulf of Alaska

(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Species	Area ¹	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock ²	Shumagin (610)	n/a	41,472	41,472
	Chirikof (620)	n/a	127,936	127,936
	Kodiak (630)	n/a	68,958	68,958
	WYK (640)	n/a	6,187	6,187
	W/C/WYK (subtotal)	321,067	250,824	244,553
	SEO (650)	16,833	12,625	12,625
	Total	337,900	263,449	257,178
Pacific cod ³	W	n/a	38,702	27,091
	C	n/a	61,320	45,990
	E	n/a	2,828	2,121
	Total	133,100	102,850	75,202
Sablefish ⁴	W	n/a	1,338	1,338
	C	n/a	4,232	4,232
	WYK	n/a	1,552	1,552
	SEO	n/a	2,436	2,436
	E (WYK and SEO) (subtotal)	n/a	3,988	3,988
	Total	11,293	9,558	9,558
Shallow-water flatfish ⁵	W	n/a	19,577	13,250
	C	n/a	17,114	17,114
	WYK	n/a	1,959	1,959
	SEO	n/a	554	554
	Total	48,407	39,204	32,877
Deep-water flatfish ⁶	W	n/a	299	299
	C	n/a	3,645	3,645
	WYK	n/a	5,409	5,409
	SEO	n/a	3,824	3,824
	Total	15,803	13,177	13,177
Rex sole	W	n/a	1,234	1,234
	C	n/a	5,707	5,707
	WYK	n/a	758	758
	SEO	n/a	1,280	1,280
	Total	11,733	8,979	8,979
Arrowtooth flounder	W	n/a	29,545	14,500
	C	n/a	109,692	75,000
	WYK	n/a	35,328	6,900
	SEO	n/a	10,787	6,900
	Total	217,522	185,352	103,300
Flathead sole	W	n/a	12,776	8,650
	C	n/a	24,893	15,400

	WYK	n/a	3,538	3,538
	SEO	n/a	171	171
	Total	50,818	41,378	27,759
Pacific ocean perch ⁷	W	n/a	2,358	2,358
	C	n/a	16,184	16,184
	WYK	n/a	2,055	2,055
	W/C/WYK	23,876	20,597	20,597
	SEO	973	839	839
	Total	24,849	21,436	21,436
	Northern rockfish ⁸	W	n/a	1,158
C		n/a	3,563	3,563
E		n/a	n/a	n/a
Total		5,631	4,721	4,721
Shortraker rockfish ⁹	W	n/a	92	92
	C	n/a	397	397
	E	n/a	834	834
	Total	1,764	1,323	1,323
Dusky rockfish ¹⁰	W	n/a	273	273
	C	n/a	3,077	3,077
	WYK	n/a	1,187	1,187
	SEO	n/a	174	174
	Total	5,759	4,711	4,711
Rougheye and Blackspotted rockfish ¹¹	W	n/a	117	117
	C	n/a	643	643
	E	n/a	382	382
	Total	1,370	1,142	1,142
Demersal shelf rockfish ¹²	SEO	361	225	225
Thornyhead rockfish	W	n/a	235	235
	C	n/a	875	875
	E	n/a	731	731
	Total	2,454	1,841	1,841
Other rockfish ^{13,14}	W and C	n/a	1,031	1,031
	WYK	n/a	580	580
	SEO	n/a	2,469	200
	Total	5,347	4,080	1,811
Atka mackerel	GW	6,200	4,700	2,000
Big skate ¹⁵	W	n/a	731	731
	C	n/a	1,257	1,257
	E	n/a	1,267	1,267
	Total	4,340	3,255	3,255
Longnose skate ¹⁶	W	n/a	152	152
	C	n/a	2,090	2,090

	E	n/a	976	976
	Total	4,291	3,218	3,218
Other skates ¹⁷	GW	2,980	2,235	2,235
Sculpins	GW	7,448	5,569	5,569
Sharks	GW	7,986	5,989	5,989
Squids	GW	1,530	1,148	1,148
Octopus	GW	2,009	1,507	1,507
Total		910,895	731,049	590,161

¹ Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2. (W=Western Gulf of Alaska; C=Central Gulf of Alaska; E=Eastern Gulf of Alaska; WYK=West Yakutat District; SEO=Southeast Outside District; GW=Gulf-wide).

² The aggregate pollock ABC for the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas is apportioned among four statistical areas after deducting 2.5 percent of the ABC for the State's pollock GHL fishery. These apportionments are considered subarea ACLs, rather than ABCs, for specification and reapportionment purposes. The ACLs in Areas 610, 620, and 630 are further divided by season, as detailed in Table 4. In the West Yakutat and Southeast Outside Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.

³ The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned 60 percent to the A season and 40 percent to the B season in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA. Pacific cod in the Eastern Regulatory Area is allocated 90 percent for processing by the inshore component and 10 percent for processing by the offshore component. Table 6 lists the final 2016 Pacific cod seasonal apportionments.

⁴ Sablefish is only allocated to trawl gear for 2016. Table 8 lists the final 2016 allocation of sablefish TACs to trawl gear.

⁵ "Shallow-water flatfish" means flatfish not including "deep-water flatfish," flathead sole, rex sole, or arrowtooth flounder.

⁶ "Deep-water flatfish" means Dover sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, and deepsea sole.

⁷ "Pacific ocean perch" means Sebastes alutus.

⁸ "Northern rockfish" means Sebastes polyspinis. For management purposes the 2 mt apportionment of ABC to the WYK District of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska has been included in the other rockfish species group.

⁹ "Shortraker rockfish" means Sebastes borealis.

¹⁰ "Dusky rockfish" means Sebastes variabilis.

¹¹ "Rougheye rockfish" means Sebastes aleutianus (rougheye) and Sebastes melanostictus (blackspotted).

¹² "Demersal shelf rockfish" means Sebastes pinniger (canary), S. nebulosus (china), S. caurinus (copper), S. maliger (quillback), S. helvomaculatus (rosethorn), S. nigrocinctus (tiger), and S. ruberrimus (yelloweye).

¹³ "Other rockfish" means Sebastes aurora (aurora), S. melanostomus (blackgill), S. paucispinis (bocaccio), S. goodei (chilipepper), S. crameri (darkblotch), S. elongatus (greenstriped), S. variegatus (harlequin), S. wilsoni (pygmy), S. babcocki (redbanded), S. proriger (redstripe), S. zacentrus (sharpchin), S. jordani (shortbelly), S. brevispinis (silvergrey), S. diploproa (splitnose), S. saxicola (stripetail), S. miniatus (vermillion), S. reedi (yellowmouth), S. entomelas (widow), and S. flavidus (yellowtail). In the Eastern GOA only, other rockfish also includes northern rockfish, S. polyspinis.

¹⁴ "Other rockfish" in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas and in the West Yakutat District means other rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish. The "other rockfish" species group in the SEO District only includes other rockfish.

¹⁵ "Big skate" means Raja binoculata.

¹⁶ "Longnose skate" means Raja rhina.

¹⁷ "Other skates" means Bathyraja spp.

Apportionment of Reserves

Section 679.20(b)(2) requires NMFS to set aside 20 percent of each TAC for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sculpins, sharks, squids, and octopuses in reserve for possible apportionment at a later date during the fishing year. For 2015 and 2016, NMFS proposed reapportionment of all the reserves in the proposed 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications published in the Federal Register on December 8, 2014 (79 FR 72593). NMFS did not receive any public comments on the proposed reapportionments. For the final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications, NMFS reapportioned, as proposed, all the reserves for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sculpins, sharks, squids, and octopuses. The TACs listed in Tables 1 and 2 reflect reapportionments of reserve amounts for these species and species groups.

Apportionments of Pollock TAC Among Seasons and Regulatory Areas, and Allocations for Processing by Inshore and Offshore Components

In the GOA, pollock is apportioned by season and area, and is further allocated for processing by inshore and offshore components. Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B), the annual pollock TAC specified for the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA is apportioned into four equal seasonal allowances of 25 percent. As established by § 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), the A, B, C, and D season allowances are available from January 20 to March 10, March 10 to May 31, August 25 to October 1, and October 1 to November 1, respectively.

Pollock TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA are apportioned among Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(A). In the A and B seasons, the apportionments are in proportion to the distribution of pollock biomass based on the four most recent NMFS winter surveys. In the C and D seasons, the apportionments are in proportion to the distribution of pollock biomass based on the four most recent NMFS summer

surveys. However, for 2015 and 2016, the Council recommended, and NMFS approves, averaging the winter and summer distribution of pollock in the Central Regulatory Area for the A season instead of using the distribution based on only the winter surveys. The average is intended to reflect the migration patterns and distribution of pollock, and the anticipated performance of the fishery, in that area during the A season for the 2015 and 2016 fishing years. For the A season, the apportionment is based on an adjusted estimate of the relative distribution of pollock biomass of approximately 8 percent, 67 percent, and 25 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively. For the B season, the apportionment is based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass at 8 percent, 83 percent, and 9 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively. For the C and D seasons, the apportionment is based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass at 27 percent, 32 percent, and 41 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively.

Within any fishing year, the amount by which a seasonal allowance is underharvested or overharvested may be added to, or subtracted from, subsequent seasonal allowances in a manner to be determined by the Regional Administrator (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B)). The rollover amount is limited to 20 percent of the subsequent seasonal apportionment for the statistical area. Any unharvested pollock above the 20-percent limit could be further distributed to the other statistical areas, in proportion to the estimated biomass in the subsequent season in those statistical areas (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B)). The pollock TACs in the WYK and SEO District of 4,719 mt and 12,625 mt, respectively, in 2015, and 6,187 mt and 12,625 mt, respectively, in 2016, are not allocated by season.

Section 679.20(a)(6)(i) requires the allocation of 100 percent of the pollock TAC in all regulatory areas and all seasonal allowances to vessels catching pollock for processing by the

inshore component after subtraction of amounts projected by the Regional Administrator to be caught by, or delivered to, the offshore component incidental to directed fishing for other groundfish species. Thus, the amount of pollock available for harvest by vessels harvesting pollock for processing by the offshore component is that amount that will be taken as incidental catch during directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock, up to the maximum retainable amounts allowed by § 679.20(e) and (f). At this time, these incidental catch amounts of pollock are unknown and will be determined during the fishing year during the course of fishing activities by the offshore component.

Tables 3 and 4 list the final 2015 and 2016 seasonal biomass distribution of pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, area apportionments, and seasonal allowances. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown.

Table 3. Final 2015 Distribution of Pollock in the Central and Western Regulatory Areas of the GOA; Seasonal Biomass Distribution, Area Apportionments; and Seasonal Allowances of Annual TAC

(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentages are rounded to the nearest 0.01.)

Season ¹	Shumagin (Area 610)		Chirikof (Area 620)		Kodiak (Area 630)		Total ²
A (Jan 20-Mar 10)	3,632	(7.99%)	30,503	(67.11%)	11,316	(24.90%)	45,452
B (Mar 10-May 31)	3,632	(7.99%)	37,820	(83.21%)	4,000	(8.80%)	45,452
C (Aug 25-Oct 1)	12,185	(26.81%)	14,628	(32.18%)	18,639	(41.01%)	45,452
D (Oct 1-Nov 1)	12,185	(26.81%)	14,628	(32.18%)	18,639	(41.01%)	45,452
Annual Total	31,634		97,579		52,594		181,806

¹ As established by § 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), the A, B, C, and D season allowances are available from January 20 to March 10, March 10 to May 31, August 25 to October 1, and October 1 to November 1, respectively. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown in this table.

² The WYK and SEO District pollock TACs are not allocated by season and are not included in the total pollock TACs shown in this table.

Table 4. Final 2016 Distribution of Pollock in the Central and Western Regulatory Areas of the GOA; Seasonal Biomass Distribution, Area Apportionments; and Seasonal Allowances of Annual TAC

(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentages are rounded to the nearest 0.01.)

Season ¹	Shumagin (Area 610)		Chirikof (Area 620)		Kodiak (Area 630)		Total ²
A (Jan 20-Mar 10)	4,760	(7.99%)	39,992	(67.11%)	14,839	(24.90%)	59,592
B (Mar 10-May 31)	4,760	(7.99%)	49,586	(83.21%)	5,245	(8.80%)	59,592
C (Aug 25-Oct 1)	15,975	(26.81%)	19,179	(32.18%)	24,437	(41.01%)	59,592
D (Oct 1-Nov 1)	15,975	(26.81%)	19,179	(32.18%)	24,437	(41.01%)	59,592
Annual Total	41,472		127,936		68,958		238,366

¹ As established by § 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), the A, B, C, and D season allowances are available from January 20 to March 10, March 10 to May 31, August 25 to October 1, and October 1 to November 1, respectively. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown in this table.

² The WYK and SEO District pollock TACs are not allocated by season and are not included in the total pollock TACs shown in this table.

Annual and Seasonal Apportionments of Pacific Cod TAC

Section 679.20(a)(12)(i) requires the allocation of the Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA among gear and operational sectors. Section 679.20(a)(6)(ii) requires the allocation of the Pacific cod TACs in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA between the inshore and offshore components. NMFS allocates the 2015 and 2016 Pacific cod TAC based on these sector allocations annually between the inshore and offshore components in the Eastern GOA; seasonally between vessels using jig gear, catcher vessels (CVs) using hook-and-line gear, catcher/processors (C/Ps) using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear in the Western GOA; seasonally between vessels using jig gear, CVs less than 50 feet in length overall using hook-and-line gear, CVs equal to or greater than 50 feet in length overall using hook-and-line gear, C/Ps using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, C/Ps using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear in the Central GOA. The overall seasonal apportionments in the Western and Central GOA are 60 percent of the annual TAC to the A season and 40 percent of the annual TAC to the B season.

Under § 679.20(a)(12)(ii), any overage or underage of the Pacific cod allowance from the A season will be subtracted from, or added to, the subsequent B season allowance. In addition, any portion of the hook-and-line, trawl, pot, or jig sector allocations that NMFS determines is likely to go unharvested by a sector may be reapportioned to other sectors for harvest during the remainder of the fishery year.

Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A) and (B), a portion of the annual Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA will be allocated to vessels with an FFP that use jig gear before TAC is apportioned among other non-jig sectors. In accordance with the FMP, the annual jig sector allocations may increase to up to 6 percent of the annual Western and Central GOA

Pacific cod TACs, depending on the annual performance of the jig sector (See Table 1 of Amendment 83 to the FMP for a detailed discussion of the jig sector allocation process (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011)). Jig sector allocation increases are established for a minimum of 2 years. NMFS has evaluated the 2014 harvest performance of the jig sector in the Western and Central GOA, and is revising the 2015 and 2016 Pacific cod apportionments to this sector as follows.

NMFS allocates the jig sector 3.5 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Western GOA, a 1.0 percent increase from the 2014 jig sector allocation. The 2015 and 2016 allocations include a base allocation of 1.5 percent, an addition of 1.0 percent and an additional 2.0 percent because this sector harvested greater than 90 percent of its initial 2012 and 2014 allocations in the Western GOA. NMFS also allocates the jig sector 1.0 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Central GOA, a 1.0 percent decrease from the 2014 jig sector allocation. The 2015 and 2016 allocations consist of a base allocation of 1.0 percent. The Central GOA jig sector harvested greater than 90 percent of its initial 2012 allocation in the Central GOA and received an additional 1.0 percent of the Central GOA Pacific cod TAC in 2013 and 2014. However, in both 2013 and 2014, the jig sector harvested less than 90 percent of the annual Central GOA Pacific cod allocation, resulting in the loss of this sector's performance-based 1.0 percent increase. Tables 5 and 6 list the seasonal apportionments and allocations of the 2015 and 2016 Pacific cod TACs.

Table 5. Final 2015 Seasonal Apportionments and Allocation of Pacific Cod Total Allowable Catch Amounts in the GOA; Allocations for the Western GOA and Central GOA Sectors and the Eastern GOA Inshore and Offshore Processing Components
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentages to the nearest 0.01. Seasonal allowances may not total precisely to annual allocation amount.)

Regulatory area and sector	Annual allocation (mt)	A Season		B Season	
		Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)	Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)
Western GOA					
Jig (3.5 % of TAC)	948	N/A	569	N/A	379
Hook-and-line CV	366	0.70	183	0.70	183
Hook-and-line C/P	5,176	10.90	2,850	8.90	2,327
Trawl CV	10,039	27.70	7,242	10.70	2,797
Trawl C/P	627	0.90	235	1.50	392
All Pot CV and Pot C/P	9,934	19.80	5,176	18.20	4,758
Total	27,091	60.00	16,255	40.00	10,837
Central GOA					
Jig (1.0% of TAC)	460	N/A	276	N/A	184
Hook-and-line < 50 CV	6,648	9.32	4,241	5.29	2,407
Hook-and-line ≥ 50 CV	3,054	5.61	2,554	1.10	500
Hook-and-line C/P	2,324	4.11	1,870	1.00	454
Trawl CV ¹	18,933	21.14	9,623	20.45	9,310
Trawl C/P	1,911	2.00	912	2.19	999
All Pot CV and Pot C/P	12,660	17.83	8,118	9.97	4,542
Total	45,990	60.00	27,594	40.00	18,396
Eastern GOA		Inshore (90% of Annual TAC)		Offshore (10% of Annual TAC)	
2,121		1,909		212	

¹Trawl vessels participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives receive 3.81 percent of the annual Central GOA TAC (see Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679), which is deducted from the Trawl CV B season allowance (see Table 12).

Table 6. Final 2016 Seasonal Apportionments and Allocation of Pacific Cod Total Allowable Catch Amounts in the GOA; Allocations for the Western GOA and Central GOA Sectors and the Eastern GOA Inshore and Offshore Processing Components
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentages to the nearest 0.01. Seasonal allowances may not total precisely to annual allocation amount.)

Regulatory area and sector	Annual allocation (mt)	A Season		B Season	
		Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)	Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)
Western GOA					
Jig (3.5 % of TAC)	948	N/A	569	N/A	379
Hook-and-line CV	366	0.70	183	0.70	183
Hook-and-line C/P	5,176	10.90	2,850	8.90	2,327
Trawl CV	10,039	27.70	7,242	10.70	2,797
Trawl C/P	627	0.90	235	1.50	392
All Pot CV and Pot C/P	9,934	19.80	5,176	18.20	4,758
Total	27,091	60.00	16,255	40.00	10,837
Central GOA					
Jig (1.0% of TAC)	460	N/A	276	N/A	184
Hook-and-line < 50 CV	6,648	9.32	4,241	5.29	2,407
Hook-and-line ≥ 50 CV	3,054	5.61	2,554	1.10	500
Hook-and-line C/P	2,324	4.11	1,870	1.00	454
Trawl CV ¹	18,933	21.14	9,623	20.45	9,310
Trawl C/P	1,911	2.00	912	2.19	999
All Pot CV and Pot C/P	12,660	17.83	8,118	9.97	4,542
Total	45,990	60.00	27,594	40.00	18,396
Eastern GOA		Inshore (90% of Annual TAC)		Offshore (10% of Annual TAC)	
2,121		1,909		212	

¹Trawl vessels participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives receive 3.81 percent of the annual Central GOA TAC (see Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679), which is deducted from the Trawl CV B season allowance (see Table 13).

Allocations of the Sablefish TACs

Section 679.20(a)(4)(i) and (ii) require allocations of sablefish TACs for each of the regulatory areas and districts to hook-and-line and trawl gear. In the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, 80 percent of each TAC is allocated to hook-and-line gear, and 20 percent of each TAC is allocated to trawl gear. In the Eastern Regulatory Area, 95 percent of the TAC is allocated to hook-and-line gear, and 5 percent is allocated to trawl gear. The trawl gear allocation in the Eastern Regulatory Area may only be used to support incidental catch of sablefish in directed fisheries for other target species (§ 679.20(a)(4)(i)).

In recognition of the prohibition against trawl gear in the SEO District of the Eastern Regulatory Area, the Council recommended and NMFS approves the allocation of 5 percent of the combined Eastern Regulatory Area sablefish TAC to trawl gear in the WYK District, making the remainder of the WYK sablefish TAC available to vessels using hook-and-line gear. NMFS allocates 100 percent of the sablefish TAC in the SEO District to vessels using hook-and-line gear. This action results in a 2015 allocation of 220 mt to trawl gear and 1,489 mt to hook-and-line gear in the WYK District, a 2015 allocation of 2,682 mt to hook-and-line gear in the SEO District, and a 2016 allocation of 199 mt to trawl gear in the WYK District. Table 7 lists the allocations of the 2015 sablefish TACs to hook-and-line and trawl gear. Table 8 lists the allocations of the 2016 sablefish TACs to trawl gear.

The Council recommended that the hook-and-line sablefish TAC be established annually to ensure that this Individual Fishery Quota (IFQ) fishery is conducted concurrently with the halibut IFQ fishery and is based on recent sablefish survey information. The Council also recommended that only a trawl sablefish TAC be established for two years so that retention of incidental catch of sablefish by trawl gear could commence in January in the second year of the

groundfish harvest specifications. Since there is an annual assessment for sablefish and the final harvest specifications are expected to be published before the IFQ season begins March 14, 2015, the Council recommended that the hook-and-line sablefish TAC be set on an annual basis, rather than for two years, so that the best scientific information available could be considered in establishing the sablefish ABCs and TACs. With the exception of the trawl allocations that were provided to the Rockfish Program cooperatives, directed fishing for sablefish with trawl gear is closed during the fishing year. Also, fishing for groundfish with trawl gear is prohibited prior to January 20. Therefore, it is not likely that the sablefish allocation to trawl gear would be reached before the effective date of the final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications.

Table 7. Final 2015 Sablefish TAC Specifications in the GOA and Allocations to Hook-and-Line and Trawl Gear
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Area/District	TAC	Hook-and-line allocation	Trawl allocation
Western	1,474	1,179	295
Central	4,658	3,726	932
West Yakutat ¹	1,708	1,489	220
Southeast Outside	2,682	2,682	0
Total	10,522	9,076	1,446

¹ The trawl allocation is based on allocating 5 percent of the combined Eastern Regulatory Area (West Yakutat and Southeast Outside combined) sablefish TAC to trawl gear in the West Yakutat District.

Table 8. Final 2016 Sablefish TAC Specifications in the GOA and Allocation to Trawl Gear¹
 (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Area/District	TAC	Hook-and-line allocation	Trawl allocation
Western	1,338	n/a	268
Central	4,232	n/a	846
West Yakutat ²	1,552	n/a	199
Southeast Outside	2,436	n/a	0
Total	9,558	n/a	1,313

¹ The Council recommended that harvest specifications for the hook-and-line gear sablefish Individual Fishing Quota fisheries be limited to 1 year.

² The trawl allocation is based on allocating 5 percent of the combined Eastern Regulatory Area (West Yakutat and Southeast Outside combined) sablefish TAC to trawl gear in the West Yakutat District.

Demersal Shelf Rockfish (DSR)

The recommended 2015 and 2016 DSR TAC is 225 mt, and management of DSR is delegated to the State. The Alaska Board of Fish has apportioned the annual SEO District DSR TACs between the commercial fishery (84 percent) and the sport fishery (16 percent) after deductions were made for anticipated subsistence harvests (7 mt). This results in 2015 and 2016 allocations of 183 mt to the commercial fishery and 35 mt to the sport fishery.

The State deducts estimates of incidental catch of DSR in the commercial halibut fishery and test fishery mortality from the DSR commercial fishery allocation. In 2014, this resulted in 32 mt being available for the directed commercial DSR fishery apportioned in one DSR district. The State estimated that there was not sufficient DSR quota available to have orderly fisheries in the three other DSR districts. DSR harvest in the halibut fishery is linked to the annual halibut catch limits; therefore the State can only estimate potential DSR incidental catch because halibut catch limits are established by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). Federally permitted CVs using hook-and-line or jig gear fishing for groundfish and Pacific halibut in the SEO District of the GOA are required to retain all DSR (§ 679.20(j)).

Apportionments to the Central GOA Rockfish Program

These final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications for the GOA include the various fishery cooperative allocations and sideboard limitations established by the Central GOA Rockfish Program. Program participants are primarily trawl CVs and trawl C/Ps, with limited participation by vessels using longline gear. The Rockfish Program assigns quota share and cooperative quota to participants for primary and secondary species, allows participants holding a license limitation program (LLP) license with rockfish quota share to form a rockfish cooperative, and allows holders of C/P LLP licenses to opt out of the fishery. The Rockfish

Program also has an entry level fishery for rockfish primary species for vessels using longline gear.

Under the Rockfish Program, rockfish primary species (Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish) in the Central GOA are allocated to participants after deducting for incidental catch needs in other directed groundfish fisheries. Participants in the Rockfish Program also receive a portion of the Central GOA TAC of specific secondary species (Pacific cod, rougheye rockfish, sablefish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish).

Additionally, the Rockfish Program establishes sideboard limits to restrict the ability of harvesters operating under the Rockfish Program to increase their participation in other, non-Rockfish Program fisheries. Besides groundfish species, the Rockfish Program allocates a portion of the trawl halibut PSC limit (191 mt) from the third season deep-water species fishery allowance for the GOA trawl fisheries to Rockfish Program participants (§ 679.81(d)), which includes 117 mt to the trawl CV sector and 74 mt to the trawl C/P sector.

Section 679.81(a)(2)(ii) requires allocations of 5 mt of Pacific ocean perch, 5 mt of northern rockfish, and 30 mt of dusky rockfish to the entry level longline fishery in 2015 and 2016. The allocation for the entry level longline fishery would increase incrementally each year if the catch exceeds 90 percent of the allocation of a species. The incremental increase in the allocation would continue each year until it is the maximum percent of the TAC for that species. In 2014, the catch did not exceed 90 percent of any allocated rockfish species. Therefore, NMFS is not increasing the entry level longline fishery 2015 and 2016 allocations in the Central GOA. Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear. The remainder of the TACs for the rockfish primary species would be allocated to the CV and C/P cooperatives. Table 9 lists the allocations of the 2015 and initial 2016 TACs for each rockfish primary species to the

entry level longline fishery, the incremental increase for future years, and the maximum percent of the TAC for the entry level longline fishery.

Table 9. Final 2015 and Initial 2016 Allocations of Rockfish Primary Species to the Entry Level Longline Fishery in the Central Gulf of Alaska.

Rockfish primary species	2015 and 2016 allocations	Incremental increase in 2016 if $\geq 90\%$ of 2015 allocation is harvested	Up to maximum % of TAC
Pacific ocean perch	5 metric tons	5 metric tons	1%
Northern rockfish	5 metric tons	5 metric tons	2%
Dusky rockfish	30 metric tons	20 metric tons	5%

Section 679.81(a)(2) requires allocations of the rockfish primary species among various sectors of the Rockfish Program. Tables 10 and 11 list the final 2015 and 2016 allocations of rockfish primary species in the Central GOA to the entry level longline fishery and Rockfish CV and C/P Cooperatives in the Rockfish Program. NMFS also is setting aside incidental catch amounts (ICAs) for other directed fisheries in the Central GOA of 2,000 mt of Pacific ocean perch, 200 mt of northern rockfish, and 250 mt of dusky rockfish. These amounts are based on recent average incidental catches in the Central GOA by other groundfish fisheries.

Allocations between vessels belonging to CV or C/P cooperatives are not included in these final harvest specifications. Rockfish Program applications for CV cooperatives and C/P cooperatives are not due to NMFS until March 1 of each calendar year, therefore, NMFS cannot calculate 2015 and 2016 allocations in conjunction with these final harvest specifications.

NMFS will post these allocations on the Alaska Region Web site at

(<http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/rockfish/>) when they become available after

March 1.

Table 10. Final 2015 Allocations of Rockfish Primary Species in the Central Gulf of Alaska to the Entry Level Longline Fishery and Rockfish Cooperatives in the Rockfish Program
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Rockfish Primary Species	TAC	Incidental catch allowance	TAC minus ICA	Allocation to the entry level longline ¹ fishery	Allocation to the Rockfish Cooperatives ²
Pacific ocean perch	15,873	2,000	13,873	5	13,868
Northern rockfish	3,772	200	3,572	5	3,567
Dusky rockfish	3,336	250	3,086	30	3,056
Total	22,981	2,450	20,531	40	20,491

¹Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear.

²Rockfish Cooperatives include vessels in CV and C/P cooperatives.

Table 11. Final 2016 Allocations of Rockfish Primary Species in the Central Gulf of Alaska to the Entry Level Longline Fishery and Rockfish Cooperatives in the Rockfish Program
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Rockfish Primary Species	TAC	Incidental catch allowance	TAC minus ICA	Allocation to the entry level longline ¹ fishery	Allocation to the Rockfish Cooperatives ²
Pacific ocean perch	16,184	2,000	14,184	5	14,179
Northern rockfish	3,563	200	3,363	5	3,358
Dusky rockfish	3,077	250	2,827	30	2,797
Total	22,824	2,450	20,374	40	20,334

¹Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear.

²Rockfish Cooperatives include vessels in CV and C/P cooperatives.

Section 679.81(c) requires allocations of rockfish secondary species to CV and C/P cooperatives in the Central GOA. CV cooperatives receive allocations of Pacific cod, sablefish from the trawl gear allocation, and thornyhead rockfish. C/P cooperatives receive allocations of sablefish from the trawl allocation, roughey rockfish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish. Tables 12 and 13 list the apportionments of the 2015 and 2016 TACs of rockfish secondary species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P cooperatives.

Table 12. Final 2015 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA to Catcher Vessel and Catcher/Processor Cooperatives
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Rockfish Secondary Species	Annual Central GOA TAC	Catcher vessel cooperatives		Catcher/Processor cooperatives	
		Percentage of TAC	Apportionment (mt)	Percentage of TAC	Apportionment (mt)
Pacific cod	45,990	3.81%	1,752	0.00%	-
Sablefish	4,658	6.78%	316	3.51%	163
Shortraker rockfish	397	0.00%	-	40.00%	159
Rougheye rockfish	632	0.00%	-	58.87%	372
Thornyhead rockfish	875	7.84%	69	26.50%	232

Table 13. Final 2016 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA to Catcher Vessel and Cather/Processor Cooperatives
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Rockfish Secondary Species	Annual Central GOA TAC	Catcher Vessel cooperatives		Catcher/Processor cooperatives	
		Percentage of TAC	Apportionment (mt)	Percentage of TAC	Apportionment (mt)
Pacific cod	45,990	3.81%	1,752	0.00%	-
Sablefish	4,232	6.78%	287	3.51%	149
Shortraker rockfish	397	0.00%	-	40.00%	159
Rougheye rockfish	643	0.00%	-	58.87%	379
Thornyhead rockfish	875	7.84%	69	26.50%	232

Halibut PSC Limits

Section 679.21(d) establishes the annual halibut PSC limit apportionments to trawl and hook-and-line gear, and authorizes the establishment of apportionments for pot gear.

Amendment 95 to the FMP (79 FR 9625, February 20, 2014) implemented measures establishing GOA halibut PSC limits in Federal regulations and reducing the halibut PSC limits in the GOA trawl and hook-and-line groundfish fisheries. These reductions are incorporated into the final 2015 and 2016 halibut PSC limits. For most gear and operational types, the halibut PSC limit reductions are phased-in over 3 years, beginning in 2014 and ending in 2016.

In December 2014, the Council incorporated these reductions into its recommended final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications. The Council recommended 2015 halibut PSC limits of 1,759 mt for trawl gear, 261 mt for hook-and-line gear, and 9 mt for the DSR fishery. The Council also recommended 2016 halibut PSC limits of 1,706 mt for the trawl sector, 256 mt for the hook-and-line sector, and 9 mt for the DSR fishery.

The DSR fishery in the SEO District is defined at § 679.21(d)(2)(ii)(A). This fishery is apportioned 9 mt of the halibut PSC limit in recognition of its small-scale harvests of groundfish. NMFS estimates low halibut bycatch in the DSR fishery because 1) the duration of the DSR fisheries and the gear soak times are short, 2) the DSR fishery occurs in the winter when less overlap occurs in the distribution of DSR and halibut, and 3) the directed commercial DSR fishery has a low DSR TAC.

The FMP authorizes the Council to exempt specific gear from the halibut PSC limits. NMFS, after consultation with the Council, exempts pot gear, jig gear, and the sablefish IFQ hook-and-line gear fishery categories from the non-trawl halibut PSC limit for 2015 and 2016. The Council recommended, and NMFS approves, these exemptions because 1) the pot gear

fisheries have low annual halibut bycatch mortality; 2) IFQ program regulations prohibit discard of halibut if any halibut IFQ permit holder on board a catcher vessel holds unused halibut IFQ (§ 679.7(f)(11)); 3) sablefish IFQ fishermen typically hold halibut IFQ permits and are therefore required to retain the halibut they catch while fishing sablefish IFQ; and 4) NMFS estimates negligible halibut mortality for the jig gear fisheries. NMFS estimates that halibut mortality is negligible in the jig gear fisheries given the small amount of groundfish harvested by jig gear, the selective nature of jig gear, and the high survival rates of halibut caught and released with jig gear.

The best available information on estimated halibut bycatch consists of data collected by fisheries observers during 2014. The calculated halibut bycatch mortality through December 20, 2014, is 1,394 mt for trawl gear and 199 mt for hook-and-line gear for a total halibut mortality of 1,593 mt. This halibut mortality was calculated using groundfish and halibut catch data from the NMFS Alaska Region's catch accounting system. This accounting system contains historical and recent catch information compiled from each Alaska groundfish fishery.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(i) and (ii) authorizes NMFS to seasonally apportion the halibut PSC limits after consultation with the Council. The FMP and regulations require the Council and NMFS to consider the following information in seasonally apportioning halibut PSC limits: 1) seasonal distribution of halibut; 2) seasonal distribution of target groundfish species relative to halibut distribution; 3) expected halibut bycatch needs on a seasonal basis relative to changes in halibut biomass and expected catch of target groundfish species; 4) expected bycatch rates on a seasonal basis; 5) expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons; 6) expected actual start of fishing effort; and 7) economic effects of establishing seasonal halibut allocations on segments of the target groundfish industry. The Council considered information from the 2014

SAFE report, NMFS catch data, State of Alaska catch data, IPHC stock assessment and mortality data, and public testimony when apportioning the halibut PSC limits. NMFS concurs with the Council's recommendations listed in Tables 14 and 15, which respectively shows the final 2015 and 2016 Pacific halibut PSC limits, allowances, and apportionments.

Sections 679.21(d)(4)(iii) and (iv) specify that any underages or overages of a seasonal apportionment of a PSC limit will be deducted from or added to the next respective seasonal apportionment within the fishing year.

Table 14. Final 2015 Pacific Halibut PSC Limits, Allowances, and Apportionments
(Values are in metric tons.)

Trawl gear			Hook-and-line gear ¹				
			Other than DSR			DSR	
Season	Percent	Amount	Season	Percent	Amount	Season	Amount
January 20 - April 1	27.5%	484	January 1 - June 10	86%	225	January 1 - December 31	9
April 1 - July 1	20%	352	June 10 - September 1	2%	5		
July 1 - September 1	30%	528	September 1 - December 31	12%	31		
September 1 - October 1	7.5%	132					
October 1 - December 31	15%	264					
Total		1,759			261		9

¹ The Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limit for hook-and-line gear is allocated to the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery and fisheries other than DSR. The hook-and-line sablefish fishery is exempt from halibut PSC limits, as are pot and jig gear for all groundfish fisheries. Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

Table 15. Final 2016 Pacific Halibut PSC Limits, Allowances, and Apportionments
(Values are in metric tons.)

Trawl gear			Hook-and-line gear ¹				
			Other than DSR			DSR	
Season	Percent	Amount	Season	Percent	Amount	Season	Amount
January 20 - April 1	27.5%	469	January 1 - June 10	86%	220	January 1 - December 31	9
April 1 - July 1	20%	341	June 10 - September 1	2%	5		
July 1 - September 1	30%	512	September 1 - December 31	12%	31		
September 1 - October 1	7.5%	128					
October 1 - December 31	15%	256					
Total		1,706			256		9

¹ The Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limit for hook-and-line gear is allocated to the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery and fisheries other than DSR. The hook-and-line sablefish fishery is exempt from halibut PSC limits, as are pot and jig gear for all groundfish fisheries. Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

Section 679.21(d)(3)(ii) authorizes further apportionment of the trawl halibut PSC limit to trawl fishery categories. The annual apportionments are based on each category's proportional share of the anticipated halibut bycatch mortality during the fishing year and optimization of the total amount of groundfish harvest under the halibut PSC limit. The fishery categories for the trawl halibut PSC limits are 1) a deep-water species fishery, composed of sablefish, rockfish, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, and arrowtooth flounder; and 2) a shallow-water species fishery, composed of pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates, and "other species" (sculpins, sharks, squids, and octopuses) (§ 679.21(d)(3)(iii)). Tables 16 and 17 list, respectively, the final 2015 and 2016 apportionments of halibut PSC trawl limits between the trawl gear deep-water and the shallow-water species fishery categories.

Table 28d to 50 CFR part 679 specifies the amount of the trawl halibut PSC limit that is assigned to the CV and C/P sectors that are participating in the Central GOA Rockfish Program. This includes 117 mt of halibut PSC limit to the CV sector and 74 mt of halibut PSC limit to the C/P sector. These amounts are allocated from the trawl deep-water species fishery's halibut PSC third seasonal apportionment.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(B) limits the amount of the halibut PSC limit allocated to Rockfish Program participants that could be re-apportioned to the general GOA trawl fisheries to no more than 55 percent of the unused annual halibut PSC apportioned to Rockfish Program participants. The remainder of the unused Rockfish Program halibut PSC limit is unavailable for use by vessels directed fishing with trawl gear for the remainder of the fishing year.

Table 16. Final 2015 Apportionment of Pacific Halibut PSC Trawl Limits Between the Trawl Gear Deep-Water Species Fishery and the Shallow-Water Species Fishery Categories (Values are in metric tons)

Season	Shallow-water	Deep-water ¹	Total
January 20 - April 1	396	88	484
April 1 - July 1	88	264	352
July 1 - September 1	176	352	528
September 1 - October 1	132	Any remainder	132
Subtotal January 20 - October 1	792	704	1,496
October 1 - December 31 ²			264
Total			1,760

¹ Vessels participating in cooperatives in the Central GOA Rockfish Program will receive 191 mt of the third season (July 1 through September 1) deep-water species fishery halibut PSC apportionment.

² There is no apportionment between trawl shallow-water and deep-water species fishery categories during the fifth season (October 1 through December 31).

Table 17. Final 2016 Apportionment of Pacific Halibut PSC Trawl Limits Between the Trawl Gear Deep-Water Species Fishery and the Shallow-Water Species Fishery Categories (Values are in metric tons)

Season	Shallow-water	Deep-water ¹	Total
January 20 - April 1	384	85	469
April 1 - July 1	85	256	341
July 1 - September 1	171	341	512
September 1 - October 1	128	Any remainder	128
Subtotal January 20 - October 1	768	682	1,450
October 1 - December 31 ²			256
Total			1,706

¹ Vessels participating in cooperatives in the Central GOA Rockfish Program will receive 191 mt of the third season (July 1 through September 1) deep-water species fishery halibut PSC apportionment.

² There is no apportionment between trawl shallow-water and deep-water species fishery categories during the fifth season (October 1 through December 31).

Section 679.21(d)(2)(B) requires that the “other hook-and-line fishery” halibut PSC limit apportionment to vessels using hook-and-line gear must be apportioned between CVs and C/Ps in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) in conjunction with these harvest specifications. A comprehensive description and example of the calculations necessary to apportion the “other hook-and-line fishery” halibut PSC limit between the hook-and-line CV and C/P sectors were included in the proposed rule to implement Amendment 83 (76 FR 44700, July 26, 2011) and are not repeated here.

For 2015, NMFS apportions halibut PSC limits of 145 mt and 116 mt to the hook-and-line CV and hook-and-line C/P sectors, respectively. For 2016, NMFS apportions halibut PSC limits of 140 mt and 116 mt to the hook-and-line CV and hook-and-line C/P sectors, respectively. Tables 18 and 19 list, respectively, the final 2015 and 2016 apportionments of halibut PSC limits between the hook-and-line CV and hook-and-line C/P sectors.

Pursuant to § 679.21(d)(2)(iii), the hook-and-line halibut PSC limit is apportioned between the CV and C/P sectors in proportion to the total Western and Central GOA Pacific cod allocations, which vary annually based on the proportion of the Pacific cod biomass. Pacific cod is apportioned among these two management areas based on the percentage of overall biomass per area, as calculated in the 2014 Pacific cod stock assessment. Updated information in the final 2014 SAFE report describes this distributional change, which is based on allocating ABC among regulatory areas on the basis of the three most recent stock surveys. The distribution of the total GOA Pacific cod ABC has changed to 36 percent Western GOA, 61 percent Central GOA, and 3 percent Eastern GOA. Therefore, the calculations made in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) incorporate the most recent change in GOA Pacific cod distribution with respect to establishing the annual halibut PSC limits for the CV and C/P hook-and-line sectors. The

annual halibut PSC limits are divided into three seasonal apportionments, using seasonal percentages of 86 percent, 2 percent, and 12 percent.

No later than November 1 of each year, NMFS will calculate the projected unused amount of halibut PSC limit by either of the hook-and-line sectors for the remainder of the year. The projected unused amount of halibut PSC limit is made available to the other hook-and-line sector for the remainder of that fishing year if NMFS determines that an additional amount of halibut PSC is necessary for that sector to continue its directed fishing operations (§ 679.21(d)(2)(iii)(C)).

Table 18. Final 2015 Apportionments of the “other hook-and-line fisheries” Annual Halibut PSC Allowance between the Hook-and-Line Gear Catcher Vessel and Catcher/Processor Sectors. (Values are in metric tons.)

“Other than DSR” allowance	Hook-and-line sector	Sector annual amount	Season	Seasonal percentage	Sector seasonal amount
261	Catcher Vessel	145	January 1 - June 10	86	125
			June 10 - September 1	2	3
			September 1 - December 31	12	17
	Catcher/Processor	116	January 1 - June 10	86	100
			June 10 - September 1	2	2
			September 1 - December 31	12	14

Table 19. Final 2016 Apportionments of the “other hook-and-line fisheries” Annual Halibut PSC Allowance between the Hook-and-Line Gear Catcher Vessel and Catcher/Processor Sectors. (Values are in metric tons.)

“Other than DSR” allowance	Hook-and-line sector	Sector annual amount	Season	Seasonal percentage	Sector seasonal amount
256	Catcher Vessel	140	January 1 - June 10	86	120
			June 10 - September 1	2	3
			September 1 - December 31	12	17
	Catcher/Processor	116	January 1 - June 10	86	100
			June 10 - September 1	2	2
			September 1 - December 31	12	14

Estimates of Halibut Biomass and Stock Condition

The IPHC annually assesses the abundance and potential yield of the Pacific halibut using all available data from the commercial and sport fisheries, other removals, and scientific surveys. Additional information on the Pacific halibut stock assessment may be found in the IPHC's 2014 Pacific halibut stock assessment (December 2014), available on the IPHC Web site at www.iphc.int. The IPHC considered the 2014 Pacific halibut stock assessment at its January 2015 annual meeting when it set the 2015 commercial halibut fishery catch limits.

Halibut Discard Mortality Rates

To monitor halibut bycatch mortality allowances and apportionments, the Regional Administrator uses observed halibut incidental catch rates, discard mortality rates (DMRs), and estimates of groundfish catch to project when a fishery's halibut bycatch mortality allowance or seasonal apportionment is reached. The DMRs are based on the best information available, including information contained in the annual SAFE report.

NMFS is implementing the Council's recommendation that the halibut DMRs developed and recommended by the IPHC for the 2013 through 2015 GOA groundfish fisheries be used for monitoring the final 2015 and 2016 halibut bycatch mortality allowances (see Tables 14 through 19). The IPHC developed the DMRs for the 2013 through 2015 GOA groundfish fisheries using the 10-year mean DMRs for those fisheries. Long-term average DMRs were not available for some fisheries, so rates from the most recent years were used. For the skate, sculpin, shark, squid, and octopus target fisheries, where not enough halibut mortality data are available, the mortality rate of halibut caught in the Pacific cod fishery for that gear type was recommended as a default rate. The IPHC will analyze observer data annually and recommend changes to the DMRs when a fishery DMR shows large variation from the mean. A discussion of the DMRs

and how the IPHC establishes them is available from the Council (see ADDRESSES). Table 20 lists the final 2015 and 2016 DMRs. These DMRs are unchanged from the proposed 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications (79 FR 72593, December 8, 2014).

Table 20. Final 2015 and 2016 Halibut Discard Mortality Rates for Vessels Fishing in the Gulf of Alaska (Values are percent of halibut assumed to be dead.)

Gear	Target fishery	Mortality rate (%)
Hook-and-line	Other fisheries ¹	11
	Skates	11
	Pacific cod	11
	Rockfish	9
Trawl	Arrowtooth flounder	73
	Deep-water flatfish	43
	Flathead sole	65
	Non-pelagic pollock	60
	Other fisheries ¹	62
	Pacific cod	62
	Pelagic pollock	71
	Rex sole	69
	Rockfish	66
	Sablefish	71
	Shallow-water flatfish	67
Pot	Other fisheries ¹	17
	Pacific cod	17

¹ Other fisheries includes all gear types for skates, sculpins, sharks, squids, octopuses, and hook-and-line sablefish.

Chinook Salmon Prohibited Species Catch Limits

In 2012, NMFS issued a final rule to implement Amendment 93 to the GOA FMP (77 FR 42629, July 20, 2012). Amendment 93 established separate Chinook salmon PSC limits in the Western and Central GOA in the directed pollock fishery. These limits require NMFS to close the pollock directed fishery in the Western and Central regulatory areas of the GOA if the applicable limit is reached (§ 679.21(h)(6)). The annual Chinook salmon PSC limits in the pollock directed fishery of 6,684 salmon in the Western GOA and 18,316 salmon in the Central GOA are set in regulation at § 679.21(h)(2)(i) and (ii). In addition, all salmon (regardless of species) taken in the pollock directed fisheries in the Western and Central GOA must be retained until an observer at the processing facility that takes delivery of the catch is provided an opportunity to count the number of salmon and to collect any scientific data or biological samples from the salmon (§ 679.21(h)(4)).

As described earlier in this preamble, NMFS issued a final rule to implement Amendment 97 to the FMP (79 FR 71350, December 2, 2014). That action established an initial annual PSC limit of 7,500 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock groundfish fisheries. This limit is apportioned among three sectors: 3,600 Chinook salmon to trawl catcher/processors, 1,200 Chinook salmon to trawl catcher vessels participating in the Central GOA Rockfish Program, and 2,700 Chinook salmon to trawl catcher vessels not participating in the Central GOA Rockfish Program that are fishing for groundfish species other than pollock (§ 679.21(i)(3)). NMFS will monitor the Chinook salmon PSC in the non-pollock GOA groundfish fisheries and close an applicable sector if it reaches its Chinook salmon PSC limit.

The Chinook salmon PSC limit for two sectors, trawl catcher/processors and trawl catcher vessels not participating in the Central GOA Rockfish Program, may be increased in

subsequent years based on the performance of these two sectors and their ability to minimize their use of their respective Chinook salmon PSC limits. If either or both of these two sectors limits its use of Chinook salmon PSC to a certain threshold amount in 2015, that sector will receive an incremental increase to its 2016 Chinook salmon PSC limit (§ 679.21(i)(3)).

American Fisheries Act (AFA) C/P and CV Groundfish Harvest and PSC Limits

Section 679.64 establishes groundfish harvesting and processing sideboard limitations on AFA C/Ps and CVs in the GOA. These sideboard limits are necessary to protect the interests of fishermen and processors who do not directly benefit from the AFA from those fishermen and processors who receive exclusive harvesting and processing privileges under the AFA. Section 679.7(k)(1)(ii) prohibits listed AFA C/Ps from harvesting any species of groundfish in the GOA. Additionally, § 679.7(k)(1)(iv) prohibits listed AFA C/Ps from processing any pollock harvested in a directed pollock fishery in the GOA and any groundfish harvested in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

AFA CVs that are less than 125 ft (38.1 meters) length overall, have annual landings of pollock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands less than 5,100 mt, and have made at least 40 groundfish landings from 1995 through 1997 are exempt from GOA sideboard limits under § 679.64(b)(2)(ii). Sideboard limits for non-exempt AFA CVs in the GOA are based on their traditional harvest levels of TAC in groundfish fisheries covered by the FMP. Section 679.64(b)(3)(iii) establishes the groundfish sideboard limitations in the GOA based on the retained catch of non-exempt AFA CVs of each sideboard species from 1995 through 1997 divided by the TAC for that species over the same period.

Tables 21 and 22 list the final 2015 and 2016 groundfish sideboard limits for non-exempt AFA CVs. NMFS will deduct all targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species made by non-exempt AFA CVs from the sideboard limits listed in Tables 21 and 22.

Table 21. Final 2015 GOA Non-Exempt American Fisheries Act Catcher Vessel (CV) Groundfish Harvest Sideboard Limits
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Species	Apportionments by season/gear	Area/component	Ratio of 1995-1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995-1997 TAC	Final 2015 TACs	Final 2015 non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limit
Pollock	A Season January 20 – March 10	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	3,632	2,196
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	30,503	3,560
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	11,316	2,295
	B Season March 10 - May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	3,632	2,196
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	37,820	4,414
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	4,000	811
	C Season August 25 - October 1	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	12,185	7,368
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	14,628	1,707
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	18,639	3,780
	D Season October 1 - November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	12,185	7,368
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	14,628	1,707
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	18,639	3,780
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.3495	4,719	1,649
SEO (650)		0.3495	12,625	4,412	
Pacific cod	A Season ¹ January 1 - June 10	W	0.1331	16,255	2,164
		C	0.0692	27,594	1,910
	B Season ² September 1 - December 31	W	0.1331	10,837	1,442
		C	0.0692	18,396	1,273
	Annual	E inshore	0.0079	1,909	15
		E offshore	0.0078	212	2
Sablefish	Annual, trawl gear	W	0.0000	295	-
		C	0.0642	932	60
		E	0.0433	220	10
Flatfish, Shallow-water	Annual	W	0.0156	13,250	207
		C	0.0587	19,297	1,133
		E	0.0126	2,834	36
Flatfish, deep-water	Annual	W	0.0000	301	-
		C	0.0647	3,689	239
		E	0.0128	9,344	120
Rex sole	Annual	W	0.0007	1,258	1
		C	0.0384	5,816	223
		E	0.0029	2,076	6
Arrowtooth flounder	Annual	W	0.0021	14,500	30
		C	0.0280	75,000	2,100
		E	0.0002	13,800	3

Flathead sole	Annual	W	0.0036	8,650	31
		C	0.0213	15,400	328
		E	0.0009	3,706	3
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.0023	2,302	5
		C	0.0748	15,873	1,187
		E	0.0466	2,837	132
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	0.0003	1,226	-
		C	0.0277	3,772	104
Shortraker rockfish	Annual	W	0.0000	92	-
		C	0.0218	397	9
		E	0.0110	834	9
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.0001	296	-
		C	0.0000	3,336	-
		E	0.0067	1,477	10
Rougheye rockfish	Annual	W	0.0000	115	-
		C	0.0237	632	15
		E	0.0124	375	5
Demersal shelf rockfish	Annual	SEO	0.0020	225	-
Thornyhead rockfish	Annual	W	0.0280	235	7
		C	0.0280	875	25
		E	0.0280	731	20
Other rockfish	Annual	W	0.0034	-	-
		C	0.1699	1,031	175
		E	0.0000	780	-
Atka mackerel	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0309	2,000	62
Big skates	Annual	W	0.0063	731	5
		C	0.0063	1,257	8
		E	0.0063	1,267	8
Longnose skates	Annual	W	0.0063	152	1
		C	0.0063	2,090	13
		E	0.0063	976	6
Other skates	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	2,235	14
Sculpins	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	5,569	35
Sharks	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	5,989	38
Squids	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	1,148	7
Octopuses	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	1,507	9

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.

² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

Table 22. Final 2016 GOA Non-Exempt American Fisheries Act Catcher Vessel (CV) Groundfish Harvest Sideboard Limits
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Species	Apportionments by season/gear	Area/component	Ratio of 1995-1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995-1997 TAC	Final 2016 TACs	Final 2016 non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limit
Pollock	A Season January 20 - March 10	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	4,760	2,879
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	39,992	4,667
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	14,839	3,009
	B Season March 10 - May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	4,760	2,879
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	49,586	5,787
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	5,245	1,064
	C Season August 25 - October 1	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	15,975	9,660
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	19,179	2,238
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	24,437	4,956
	D Season October 1 - November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	15,975	9,660
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	19,179	2,238
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	24,437	4,956
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.3495	6,187	2,162
		SEO (650)	0.3495	12,625	4,412
Pacific cod	A Season ¹ January 1 - June 10	W	0.1331	16,255	2,164
		C	0.0692	27,594	1,910
	B Season ² September 1 - December 31	W	0.1331	10,837	1,442
		C	0.0692	18,396	1,273
	Annual	E inshore	0.0079	1,909	15
		E offshore	0.0078	212	2
Sablefish	Annual, trawl gear	W	0.0000	268	-
		C	0.0642	846	54
		E	0.0433	199	9
Flatfish, Shallow-water	Annual	W	0.0156	13,250	207
		C	0.0587	17,114	1,005
		E	0.0126	2,513	32
Flatfish, deep-water	Annual	W	0.0000	299	-
		C	0.0647	3,645	236
		E	0.0128	9,233	118
Rex sole	Annual	W	0.0007	1,234	1
		C	0.0384	5,707	219
		E	0.0029	2,038	6
Arrowtooth flounder	Annual	W	0.0021	14,500	30
		C	0.0280	75,000	2,100
		E	0.0002	13,800	3
Flathead sole	Annual	W	0.0036	8,650	31

		C	0.0213	15,400	328
		E	0.0009	3,709	3
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.0023	2,358	5
		C	0.0748	16,184	1,211
		E	0.0466	2,894	135
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	0.0003	1,158	-
		C	0.0277	3,563	99
Shortraker rockfish	Annual	W	0.0000	92	-
		C	0.0218	397	9
		E	0.0110	834	9
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.0001	273	-
		C	0.0000	3,077	-
		E	0.0067	1,361	9
Rougheye rockfish	Annual	W	0.0000	117	-
		C	0.0237	643	15
		E	0.0124	382	5
Demersal shelf rockfish	Annual	SEO	0.0020	225	-
Thornyhead rockfish	Annual	W	0.0280	235	7
		C	0.0280	875	25
		E	0.0280	731	20
Other rockfish	Annual	W	0.0034	-	-
		C	0.1699	1,031	175
		E	0.0000	780	-
Atka mackerel	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0309	2,000	62
Big skates	Annual	W	0.0063	731	5
		C	0.0063	1,257	8
		E	0.0063	1,267	8
Longnose skates	Annual	W	0.0063	152	1
		C	0.0063	2,090	13
		E	0.0063	976	6
Other skates	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	2,235	14
Sculpins	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	5,569	35
Sharks	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	5,989	38
Squids	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	1,148	7
Octopuses	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0063	1,507	9

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.

² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

Non-Exempt AFA Catcher Vessel Halibut PSC Limits

The halibut PSC sideboard limits for non-exempt AFA CVs in the GOA are based on the aggregate retained groundfish catch by non-exempt AFA CVs in each PSC target category from 1995 through 1997 divided by the retained catch of all vessels in that fishery from 1995 through 1997 (§ 679.64(b)(4)). Tables 23 and 24 list the final 2015 and 2016 non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC limits for vessels using trawl gear in the GOA, respectively. The 2015 and 2016 seasonal apportionments of trawl halibut PSC limits between the deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries categories proportionately incorporate reductions made to the annual trawl halibut PSC limits and associated seasonal apportionments (see Tables 14 and 15).

Table 23. Final 2015 Non-Exempt AFA CV Halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) Limits for Vessels Using Trawl Gear in the GOA
(Values are rounded to nearest metric ton.)

Season	Season dates	Target fishery	Ratio of 1995-1997 non-exempt AFA CV retained catch to total retained catch	2015 PSC limit	2015 non-exempt AFA CV PSC limit
1	January 20 - April 1	shallow-water	0.340	396	135
		deep-water	0.070	88	6
2	April 1 - July 1	shallow-water	0.340	88	30
		deep-water	0.070	264	18
3	July 1 - September 1	shallow-water	0.340	176	60
		deep-water	0.070	352	25
4	September 1 - October 1	shallow-water	0.340	132	45
		deep-water	0.070	0	0
5	October 1 - December 31	all targets	0.205	264	54
Total:				1,760	373

Table 24. Final 2016 Non-Exempt AFA CV Halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) Limits for Vessels Using Trawl Gear in the GOA
(Values are rounded to nearest metric ton.)

Season	Season dates	Target fishery	Ratio of 1995-1997 non-exempt AFA CV retained catch to total retained catch	2016 PSC limit	2016 non-exempt AFA CV PSC limit
1	January 20 - April 1	shallow-water	0.340	384	131
		deep-water	0.070	85	6
2	April 1 - July 1	shallow-water	0.340	85	29
		deep-water	0.070	256	18
3	July 1 - September 1	shallow-water	0.340	171	58
		deep-water	0.070	341	24
4	September 1 - October 1	shallow-water	0.340	128	44
		deep-water	0.070	0	0
5	October 1 - December 31	all targets	0.205	256	52
Total:				1,706	361

Non-AFA Crab Vessel Groundfish Harvest Limitations

Section 680.22 establishes groundfish catch limits for vessels with a history of participation in the Bering Sea snow crab fishery to prevent these vessels from using the increased flexibility provided by the Crab Rationalization Program to expand their level of participation in the GOA groundfish fisheries. Sideboard limits restrict these vessels' catch to their collective historical landings in each GOA groundfish fishery (except the fixed-gear sablefish fishery). Sideboard limits also apply to catch made using an LLP license derived from the history of a restricted vessel, even if that LLP license is used on another vessel.

The basis for these sideboard limits is described in detail in the final rules implementing the major provisions of Amendments 18 and 19 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (70 FR 10174, March 2, 2005), Amendment 34 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Island King and Tanner Crabs (76 FR 35772, June 20, 2011), and Amendment 83 to the GOA FMP (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011).

Tables 25 and 26 list the final 2015 and 2016 groundfish sideboard limitations for non-AFA crab vessels. All targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species made by non-AFA crab vessels or associated LLP licenses will be deducted from these sideboard limits.

Table 25. Final 2015 GOA Non-American Fisheries Act Crab Vessel Groundfish Harvest Sideboard Limits

(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Species	Season/gear	Area/component/ gear	Ratio of 1996- 2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996- 2000 total harvest	Final 2015 TACs	Final 2015 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit
Pollock	A Season January 20 - March 10	Shumagin (610)	0.0098	3,632	36
		Chirikof (620)	0.0031	30,503	95
		Kodiak (630)	0.0002	11,316	2
	B Season March 10 - May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.0098	3,632	36
		Chirikof (620)	0.0031	37,820	117
		Kodiak (630)	0.0002	4,000	1
	C Season August 25 - October 1	Shumagin (610)	0.0098	12,185	119
		Chirikof (620)	0.0031	14,628	45
		Kodiak (630)	0.0002	18,639	4
	D Season October 1 - November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.0098	12,185	119
		Chirikof (620)	0.0031	14,628	45
		Kodiak (630)	0.0002	18,639	4
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.0000	4,719	-
SEO (650)		0.0000	12,625	-	
Pacific cod	A Season ¹ January 1 - June 10	W Jig	0.0000	16,255	-
		W Hook-and-line CV	0.0004	16,255	7
		W Hook-and-line C/P	0.0018	16,255	29
		W Pot CV	0.0997	16,255	1,621
		W Pot C/P	0.0078	16,255	127
		W Trawl CV	0.0007	16,255	11
		C Jig	0.0000	27,594	-
		C Hook-and-line CV	0.0001	27,594	3
		C Hook-and-line C/P	0.0012	27,594	33
		C Pot CV	0.0474	27,594	1,308
		C Pot C/P	0.0136	27,594	375
		C Trawl CV	0.0012	27,594	33
		B Season ² Jig Gear: June 10 - December 31 All other gears: September 1 -	W Jig	0.0000	10,837
	W Hook-and-line CV		0.0004	10,837	4
	W Hook-and-line C/P		0.0001	10,837	20
	W Pot CV		0.0997	10,837	1,080
	W Pot C/P		0.0078	10,837	85

	December 31				
		W Trawl CV	0.0007	10,837	8
		C Jig	0.0000	18,396	-
		C Hook-and-line CV	0.0001	18,396	2
		C Hook-and-line C/P	0.0012	18,396	22
		C Pot CV	0.0474	18,396	872
		C Pot C/P	0.0136	18,396	250
		C Trawl CV	0.0012	18,396	22
	Annual	E inshore	0.0110	1,909	21
		E offshore	0.0000	212	-
Sablefish	Annual, trawl gear	W	0.0000	295	-
		C	0.0000	932	-
		E	0.0000	220	-
Flatfish, shallow-water	Annual	W	0.0059	13,250	78
		C	0.0001	19,297	2
		E	0.0000	2,834	-
Flatfish, deep-water	Annual	W	0.0035	301	1
		C	0.0000	3,689	-
		E	0.0000	9,344	-
Rex sole	Annual	W	0.0000	1,258	-
		C	0.0000	5,816	-
		E	0.0000	2,076	-
Arrowtooth flounder	Annual	W	0.0004	14,500	6
		C	0.0001	75,000	8
		E	0.0000	13,800	-
Flathead sole	Annual	W	0.0002	8,650	2
		C	0.0004	15,400	6
		E	0.0000	3,706	-
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.0000	2,302	-
		C	0.0000	15,873	-
		E	0.0000	2,837	-
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	0.0005	1,226	1
		C	0.0000	3,772	-
Shortraker rockfish	Annual	W	0.0013	92	0
		C	0.0012	397	0
		E	0.0009	834	1
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.0017	296	1
		C	0.0000	3,336	-
		E	0.0000	1,477	-
Rougheye rockfish	Annual	W	0.0067	115	1
		C	0.0047	632	3

		E	0.0008	375	0
Demersal shelf rockfish	Annual	SEO	0.0000	225	-
Thornyhead rockfish	Annual	W	0.0047	235	1
		C	0.0066	875	6
		E	0.0045	731	3
Other rockfish	Annual	W	0.0035	-	-
		C	0.0033	1,031	3
		E	0.0000	780	-
Atka mackerel	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0000	2,000	-
Big skate	Annual	W	0.0392	731	29
		C	0.0159	1,257	20
		E	0.0000	1,267	-
Longnose skate	Annual	W	0.0392	152	6
		C	0.0159	2,090	33
		E	0.0000	976	-
Other skates	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	2,235	39
Sculpins	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	5,569	98
Sharks	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	5,989	105
Squids	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	1,148	20
Octopuses	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	1,507	27

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.

² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

Table 26. Final 2016 GOA Non-American Fisheries Act Crab Vessel Groundfish Harvest Sideboard Limits

(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Species	Season/gear	Area/component/ gear	Ratio of 1996- 2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996- 2000 total harvest	Final 2016 TACs	Final 2016 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit
Pollock	A Season January 20 - March 10	Shumagin (610)	0.0098	4,760	47
		Chirikof (620)	0.0031	39,992	124
		Kodiak (630)	0.0002	14,839	3
	B Season March 10 - May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.0098	4,760	47
		Chirikof (620)	0.0031	49,586	154
		Kodiak (630)	0.0002	5,245	1
	C Season August 25 - October 1	Shumagin (610)	0.0098	15,975	157
		Chirikof (620)	0.0031	19,179	59
		Kodiak (630)	0.0002	24,437	5
	D Season October 1 - November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.0098	15,975	157
		Chirikof (620)	0.0031	19,179	59
		Kodiak (630)	0.0002	24,437	5
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.0000	6,187	-
		SEO (650)	0.0000	12,625	-
Pacific cod	A Season ¹ January 1 - June 10	W Jig	0.0000	16,255	-
		W Hook-and-line CV	0.0004	16,255	7
		W Hook-and-line C/P	0.0018	16,255	29
		W Pot CV	0.0997	16,255	1,621
		W Pot C/P	0.0078	16,255	127
		W Trawl CV	0.0007	16,255	11
		C Jig	0.0000	27,594	-
		C Hook-and-line CV	0.0001	27,594	3
		C Hook-and-line C/P	0.0012	27,594	33
		C Pot CV	0.0474	27,594	1,308
		C Pot C/P	0.0136	27,594	375
		C Trawl CV	0.0012	27,594	33
	B Season ² Jig Gear: June 10 - December 31 All other gears: September 1 -	W Jig	0.0000	10,837	-
		W Hook-and-line CV	0.0004	10,837	4
		W Hook-and-line C/P	0.0018	10,837	20
		W Pot CV	0.0997	10,837	1,080
		W Pot C/P	0.0078	10,837	85

	December 31				
		W Trawl CV	0.0007	10,837	8
		C Jig	0.0000	18,396	-
		C Hook-and-line CV	0.0001	18,396	2
		C Hook-and-line C/P	0.0012	18,396	22
		C Pot CV	0.0474	18,396	872
		C Pot C/P	0.0136	18,396	250
		C Trawl CV	0.0012	18,396	22
	Annual	E inshore	0.0110	1,909	21
		E offshore	0.0000	212	-
Sablefish	Annual, trawl gear	W	0.0000	268	-
		C	0.0000	846	-
		E	0.0000	199	-
Flatfish, shallow-water	Annual	W	0.0059	13,250	78
		C	0.0001	17,114	2
		E	0.0000	2,513	-
Flatfish, deep-water	Annual	W	0.0035	299	1
		C	0.0000	3,645	-
		E	0.0000	9,233	-
Rex sole	Annual	W	0.0000	1,234	-
		C	0.0000	5,707	-
		E	0.0000	2,038	-
Arrowtooth flounder	Annual	W	0.0004	14,500	6
		C	0.0001	75,000	8
		E	0.0000	13,800	-
Flathead sole	Annual	W	0.0002	8,650	2
		C	0.0004	15,400	6
		E	0.0000	3,709	-
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.0000	2,358	-
		C	0.0000	16,184	-
		E	0.0000	2,894	-
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	0.0005	1,158	1
		C	0.0000	3,563	-
Shortraker rockfish	Annual	W	0.0013	92	0
		C	0.0012	397	0
		E	0.0009	834	1
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.0017	273	0
		C	0.0000	3,077	-
		E	0.0000	1,361	-
Rougheye rockfish	Annual	W	0.0067	117	1
		C	0.0047	643	3

		E	0.0008	382	0
Demersal shelf rockfish	Annual	SEO	0.0000	225	-
Thornyhead rockfish	Annual	W	0.0047	235	1
		C	0.0066	875	6
		E	0.0045	731	3
Other rockfish	Annual	W	0.0035	-	-
		C	0.0033	1,031	3
		E	0.0000	780	-
Atka mackerel	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0000	2,000	-
Big skate	Annual	W	0.0392	731	29
		C	0.0159	1,257	20
		E	0.0000	1,267	-
Longnose skate	Annual	W	0.0392	152	6
		C	0.0159	2,090	33
		E	0.0000	976	-
Other skates	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	2,235	39
Sculpins	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	5,569	98
Sharks	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	5,989	105
Squids	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	1,148	20
Octopuses	Annual	Gulfwide	0.0176	1,507	27

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.

² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

Rockfish Program Groundfish Sideboard and Halibut PSC Limitations

The Rockfish Program establishes three classes of sideboard provisions: CV groundfish sideboard restrictions, C/P rockfish sideboard restrictions, and C/P opt-out vessel sideboard restrictions. These sideboards are intended to limit the ability of rockfish harvesters to expand into other fisheries.

CVs participating in the Rockfish Program may not participate in directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the West Yakutat district and Western GOA from July 1 through July 31. Also, CVs may not participate in directed fishing for arrowtooth flounder, deep-water flatfish, and rex sole in the GOA from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(d)).

Catcher/processors participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives are restricted by rockfish and halibut PSC sideboard limits. These C/Ps are prohibited from directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the West Yakutat district and Western GOA from July 1 through July 31. Holders of C/P-designated LLP licenses that opt out of participating in a Rockfish Program cooperative will be able to access that portion of each sideboard limit that is not assigned to rockfish cooperatives. Tables 27 and 28 list the final 2015 and 2016 Rockfish Program C/P sideboard limits in the West Yakutat district and the Western GOA. Due to confidentiality requirements associated with fisheries data, the sideboard limits for the West Yakutat district are not displayed.

Table 27. Final 2015 Rockfish Program Harvest Limits by Sector for West Yakutat District and Western GOA by the Catcher/Processor Sector.
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Area	Fishery	C/P sector (% of TAC)	Final 2015 TACs	Final 2015 C/P limit
West Yakutat District	Dusky rockfish	Confidential ¹	1,288	Confidential ¹
	Pacific ocean perch	Confidential ¹	2,014	Confidential ¹
Western GOA	Dusky rockfish	72.3	296	214
	Pacific ocean perch	50.6	2,302	1,165
	Northern rockfish	74.3	1,226	911

¹ Not released due to confidentiality requirements associated with fish ticket data, as established by NMFS and the State of Alaska.

Table 28. Final 2016 Rockfish Program Harvest Limits by Sector for West Yakutat District and Western GOA by the Catcher/Processor Sector.
(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Area	Fishery	C/P sector (% of TAC)	Final 2016 TACs	Final 2016 C/P limit
West Yakutat District	Dusky rockfish	Confidential ¹	1,187	Confidential ¹
	Pacific ocean perch	Confidential ¹	2,055	Confidential ¹
Western GOA	Dusky rockfish	72.3	273	197
	Pacific ocean perch	50.6	2,358	1,193
	Northern rockfish	74.3	1,158	860

¹ Not released due to confidentiality requirements associated with fish ticket data, as established by NMFS and the State of Alaska.

Under the Rockfish Program, the C/P sector is subject to halibut PSC sideboard limits for the trawl deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries from July 1 through July 31. No halibut PSC sideboard limits apply to the CV sector, as vessels participating in cooperatives receive a portion of the annual halibut PSC limit. C/Ps that opt out of the Rockfish Program would be able to access that portion of the deep-water and shallow-water halibut PSC sideboard limit not assigned to C/P rockfish cooperatives. The sideboard provisions for C/Ps that elect to opt out of participating in a rockfish cooperative are described in § 679.82(c), (e), and (f). Sideboard limits are linked to the catch history of specific vessels that may choose to opt out. After March 1, NMFS will determine which C/Ps have opted-out of the Rockfish Program in 2015, and will know the ratios and amounts used to calculate opt-out sideboard ratios. NMFS will then calculate any applicable opt-out sideboards and post these allocations on the Alaska Region Web site at <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/rockfish/>. Tables 29 and 30 list the 2015 and 2016 Rockfish Program halibut PSC limits for the catcher/processor sector. These halibut PSC limits proportionately incorporate reductions made to the annual trawl halibut PSC limits and associated season apportionments (see Tables 14 and 15).

Table 29. Final 2015 Rockfish Program Halibut Mortality Limits for the Catcher/Processor Sector

(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Sector	Shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	Deep-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	2015 halibut mortality limit (mt)	Annual shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)	Annual deep-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)
Catcher/processor	0.10	2.50	1,759	2	44

Table 30. Final 2016 Rockfish Program Halibut Mortality Limits for the Catcher/Processor Sector

(Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton.)

Sector	Shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	Deep-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	2016 halibut mortality limit (mt)	Annual shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)	Annual deep-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)
Catcher/processor	0.10	2.50	1,706	2	43

Amendment 80 Program Groundfish and PSC Sideboard Limits

Amendment 80 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (Amendment 80 Program) established a limited access privilege program for the non-AFA trawl C/P sector. The Amendment 80 Program established groundfish and halibut PSC catch limits for Amendment 80 Program participants to limit the ability of participants eligible for the Amendment 80 Program to expand their harvest efforts in the GOA.

Section 679.92 establishes groundfish harvesting sideboard limits on all Amendment 80 program vessels, other than the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE, to amounts no greater than the limits listed in Table 37 to 50 CFR part 679. Under regulations at § 679.92(d), the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE is prohibited from directed fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, Pacific ocean perch, dusky rockfish, and northern rockfish in the GOA.

Groundfish sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels operating in the GOA are based on their average aggregate harvests from 1998 through 2004. Tables 31 and 32 list the final 2015 and 2016 sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels. NMFS will deduct all targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species made by Amendment 80 Program vessels from the sideboard limits in Tables 31 and 32.

Table 31. Final 2015 GOA Groundfish Sideboard Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels
(Values are rounded to nearest metric ton.)

Species	Apportionments and allocations by season	Area	Ratio of Amendment 80 sector vessels 1998 - 2004 catch to TAC	2015 TAC (mt)	2015 Amendment 80 vessel sideboards (mt)
Pollock	A Season January 20 - February 25	Shumagin (610)	0.003	3,632	11
		Chirikof (620)	0.002	30,503	61
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	11,316	23
	B Season March 10 - May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.003	3,632	11
		Chirikof (620)	0.002	37,820	76
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	4,000	8
	C Season August 25 - September 15	Shumagin (610)	0.003	12,185	37
		Chirikof (620)	0.002	14,628	29
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	18,639	37
	D Season October 1 - November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.003	12,185	37
		Chirikof (620)	0.002	14,628	29
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	18,639	37
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.002	4,719	9
Pacific cod	A Season ¹ January 1 - June 10	W	0.020	16,255	325
		C	0.044	27,594	1,214
	B Season ² September 1 - December 31	W	0.020	10,837	217
		C	0.044	18,396	809
	Annual	WYK	0.034	2,121	72
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.994	2,302	2,288
		WYK	0.961	2,014	1,935
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	1.000	1,226	1,226
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.764	296	226
		WYK	0.896	1,288	1,154

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.

² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

Table 32. Final 2016 GOA Groundfish Sideboard Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels
(Values are rounded to nearest metric ton.)

Species	Apportionments and allocations by season	Area	Ratio of Amendment 80 sector vessels 1998 - 2004 catch to TAC	2016 TAC (mt)	2016 Amendment 80 vessel sideboards (mt)
Pollock	A Season January 20 - February 25	Shumagin (610)	0.003	4,760	14
		Chirikof (620)	0.002	39,992	80
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	14,839	30
	B Season March 10 - May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.003	4,760	14
		Chirikof (620)	0.002	49,586	99
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	5,245	10
	C Season August 25 - September 15	Shumagin (610)	0.003	15,975	48
		Chirikof (620)	0.002	19,179	38
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	24,437	49
	D Season October 1 - November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.003	15,975	48
		Chirikof (620)	0.002	19,179	38
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	24,437	49
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.002	6,187	12
Pacific cod	A Season ¹ January 1 - June 10	W	0.020	16,255	325
		C	0.044	27,594	1,214
	B Season ² September 1 - December 31	W	0.020	10,837	217
		C	0.044	18,396	809
	Annual	WYK	0.034	2,121	72
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.994	2,358	2,344
		WYK	0.961	2,055	1,975
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	1.000	1,158	1,158
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.764	273	209
		WYK	0.896	1,187	1,064

¹ The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.

² The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

The PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels in the GOA are based on the historic use of halibut PSC by Amendment 80 Program vessels in each PSC target category from 1998 through 2004. These values are slightly lower than the average historic use to accommodate two factors: allocation of halibut PSC cooperative quota under the Central GOA Rockfish Program and the exemption of the F/V GOLDEN FLEECE from this restriction (§ 679.92(b)(2)). Tables 33 and 34 list the final 2015 and 2016 halibut PSC limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels, respectively. These tables incorporate the maximum percentages of the halibut PSC sideboard limits that may be used by Amendment 80 Program vessels as contained in Table 38 to 50 CFR part 679. These halibut PSC limits proportionately incorporate the reductions made to the annual trawl halibut PSC limits and associated seasonal apportionments (see Tables 14 and 15). Additionally, residual amounts of a seasonal Amendment 80 sideboard halibut PSC limit may carry forward to the next season limit (§ 679.92(b)(2)).

Table 33. Final 2015 Halibut PSC Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels in the GOA
(Values are rounded to nearest metric ton.)

Season	Season dates	Target fishery	Historic Amendment 80 use of the annual halibut PSC limit catch (ratio)	2015 annual PSC limit (mt)	2015 Amendment 80 vessel PSC limit
1	January 20 - April 1	shallow-water	0.0048	1,759	8
		deep-water	0.0115	1,759	20
2	April 1 - July 1	shallow-water	0.0189	1,759	33
		deep-water	0.1072	1,759	189
3	July 1 - September 1	shallow-water	0.0146	1,759	26
		deep-water	0.0521	1,759	92
4	September 1 - October 1	shallow-water	0.0074	1,759	13
		deep-water	0.0014	1,759	2
5	October 1 - December 31	shallow-water	0.0227	1,759	40
		deep-water	0.0371	1,759	65
				Total:	488

Table 34. Final 2016 Halibut PSC Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels in the GOA
(Values are rounded to nearest metric ton.)

Season	Season dates	Target fishery	Historic Amendment 80 use of the annual halibut PSC limit catch (ratio)	2016 annual PSC limit (mt)	2016 Amendment 80 vessel PSC limit
1	January 20 - April 1	shallow-water	0.0048	1,706	8
		deep-water	0.0115	1,706	20
2	April 1 - July 1	shallow-water	0.0189	1,706	32
		deep-water	0.1072	1,706	183
3	July 1 - September 1	shallow-water	0.0146	1,706	25
		deep-water	0.0521	1,706	89
4	September 1 - October 1	shallow-water	0.0074	1,706	13
		deep-water	0.0014	1,706	2
5	October 1 - December 31	shallow-water	0.0227	1,706	39
		deep-water	0.0371	1,706	63
				Total:	474

Directed Fishing Closures

Pursuant to § 679.20(d)(1)(i), if the Regional Administrator determines 1) that any allocation or apportionment of a target species or species group allocated or apportioned to a fishery will be reached; or 2) with respect to pollock and Pacific cod, that an allocation or apportionment to an inshore or offshore component or sector allocation will be reached, the Regional Administrator may establish a directed fishing allowance (DFA) for that species or species group. If the Regional Administrator establishes a DFA and that allowance is or will be reached before the end of the fishing year, NMFS will prohibit directed fishing for that species or species group in the specified GOA regulatory area or district (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iii)).

The Regional Administrator has determined that the TACs for the species listed in Table 35 are necessary to account for the incidental catch of these species in other anticipated groundfish fisheries for the 2015 and 2016 fishing years.

Table 35. 2015 and 2016 Directed Fishing Closures in the GOA (Amounts for incidental catch in other directed fisheries are in metric tons.)

Target	Area/component/gear	Incidental catch amount and year (if amounts differ by year)
Pollock	all/offshore	not applicable ¹
Sablefish ²	all/trawl	1,446 (2015) 1,313 (2016)
Pacific cod	Western, catcher/processor, trawl Central, catcher/processor, trawl	627 1,911
Shortraker rockfish ²	all	1,323
Rougheye rockfish ²	all	1,122 (2015) 1,142 (2016)
Thornyhead rockfish	all	1,841
Other rockfish	all	1,811
Atka mackerel	all	2,000
Big skate	all	3,255
Longnose skate	all	3,218
Other skates	all	2,235
Sharks	all	5,989
Squids	all	1,148
Octopuses	all	1,507

¹ Pollock is closed to directed fishing in the GOA by the offshore component under § 679.20(a)(6)(i).

² Closures not applicable to participants in cooperatives conducted under the Central GOA Rockfish Program.

Consequently, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator establishes the DFA for the species or species groups listed in Table 35 as zero mt. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for those species, areas, gear types, and components in the GOA listed in Table 35. These closures will remain in effect through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

Section 679.64(b)(5) provides for management of AFA CV groundfish harvest limits and PSC bycatch limits using directed fishing closures and PSC closures according to procedures set out at §§ 679.20(d)(1)(iv), 679.21(d)(6), and 679.21(e)(3)(v). The Regional Administrator has determined that, in addition to the closures listed above, many of the non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limits listed in Tables 21 and 22 are necessary as incidental catch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries for the 2015 and 2016 fishing years. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iv), the Regional Administrator sets the DFAs for the species and species groups in Table 36 at zero mt. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing by non-exempt AFA CVs in the GOA for the species and specified areas listed in Table 36. These closures will remain in effect through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

Table 36. 2015 and 2016 Non-Exempt AFA CV Sideboard Directed Fishing Closures for All Gear Types in the GOA

(Amounts for incidental catch in other directed fisheries are in metric tons.)

Species	Regulatory area/district	Incidental catch amount
Pacific cod	Eastern	15 (inshore) and 2 (offshore)
Shallow-water flatfish	Eastern	36 in 2015, 32 in 2016
Deep-water flatfish	Western	0
Rex sole	Eastern and Western	6 and 1 (2015), 5 and 1 (2016)
Arrowtooth flounder	Eastern and Western	3 and 30
Flathead sole	Eastern and Western	3 and 31
Pacific ocean perch	Western	5
Northern rockfish	Western	0
Dusky rockfish	Entire GOA	10 in 2015, 9 in 2016
Demersal shelf rockfish	SEO District	0
Sculpins	Entire GOA	35
Squids	Entire GOA	7

Section 680.22 provides for the management of non-AFA crab vessel sideboards using directed fishing closures in accordance with § 680.22(e)(2) and (3). The Regional Administrator has determined that the non-AFA crab vessel sideboards listed in Tables 25 and 26 are insufficient to support a directed fishery and has set the sideboard DFA at zero mt, with the exception of Pacific cod pot CV sector apportionments in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas. Therefore, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing by non-AFA crab vessels in the GOA for all species and species groups listed in Tables 25 and 26, with the exception of the Pacific cod pot CV sector apportionments in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas.

Closures implemented under the 2014 and 2015 GOA harvest specifications for groundfish (79 FR 12890, March 6, 2014) remain effective under authority of these final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications, and are posted at the following Web site:

http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/cm/info_bulletins/. While these closures are in effect, the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a fishing trip.

These closures to directed fishing are in addition to closures and prohibitions found in regulations at 50 CFR part 679. NMFS may implement other closures during the 2015 and 2016 fishing years as necessary for effective conservation and management.

Comments and Response

NMFS did not receive any comments in response to the proposed 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications (79 FR 72593, December 8, 2014).

Classification

NMFS has determined that these final harvest specifications are consistent with the FMP and with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is authorized under 50 CFR 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Orders 12866 and 13563.

NMFS prepared an EIS for this action (see ADDRESSES) and made it available to the public on January 12, 2007 (72 FR 1512). On February 13, 2007, NMFS issued the Record of Decision (ROD) for the EIS. In January 2015, NMFS prepared a Supplemental Information Report (SIR) for this action. Copies of the EIS, ROD, and SIR for this action are available from NMFS (see ADDRESSES). The EIS analyzes the environmental consequences of the groundfish harvest specifications and alternative harvest strategies on resources in the action area. The EIS found no significant environmental consequences of this action and its alternatives. The preferred alternative is a harvest strategy in which TACs are set at a level that falls within the range of ABCs recommended by the Council's SSC; the sum of the TACs must achieve the OY specified in the FMP. The SIR evaluates the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS (SEIS) for the 2015 and 2016 groundfish harvest specifications.

An SEIS should be prepared if 1) the agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns, or 2) significant new circumstances or information exist relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts (40 CFR 1502.9(c)(1)). After reviewing the information contained in the SIR and SAFE reports, the Regional Administrator has determined that 1) approval of the 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications, which were set according to the preferred harvest strategy in the EIS, do not constitute a substantial change in the action; and 2) there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the action or its impacts. Additionally, the 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications will result in environmental impacts within the scope of those analyzed and disclosed in the EIS. Therefore, supplemental

National Environmental Policy Act documentation is not necessary to implement the 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications.

Section 604 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act requires that, when an agency promulgates a final rule under section 553 of Title 5 of the United States Code, after being required by that section, or any other law, to publish a general notice of proposed rulemaking, the agency shall prepare a final regulatory flexibility analysis (FRFA).

Section 604 describes the required contents of a FRFA: 1) a statement of the need for, and objectives of, the rule; 2) a statement of the significant issues raised by the public comments in response to the initial regulatory flexibility analysis, a statement of the assessment of the agency of such issues, and a statement of any changes made in the proposed rule as a result of such comments; 3) the response of the agency to any comments filed by the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration in response to the proposed rule, and a detailed statement of any change made to the proposed rule in the final rule as a result of the comments; 4) a description of and an estimate of the number of small entities to which the rule will apply or an explanation of why no such estimate is available; 5) a description of the projected reporting, recordkeeping and other compliance requirements of the rule, including an estimate of the classes of small entities which will be subject to the requirement and the type of professional skills necessary for preparation of the report or record; 6) a description of the steps the agency has taken to minimize the significant economic impact on small entities consistent with the stated objectives of applicable statutes, including a statement of the factual, policy, and legal reasons for selecting the alternative adopted in the final rule and why each one of the other significant alternatives to the rule considered by the agency which affect the impact on small entities was rejected.

A description of this action, its purpose, and its legal basis are contained at the beginning of the preamble to this final rule and are not repeated here.

NMFS published the proposed rule on December 8, 2014 (79 FR 72593). NMFS prepared an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) to accompany this action, and included a summary in the proposed rule. The comment period closed on January 7, 2015. No comments were received on the IRFA or the economic impacts of the rule more generally.

The entities directly regulated by this action include a) entities operating vessels with groundfish FFPs catching FMP groundfish in Federal waters; b) all entities operating vessels, regardless of whether they hold groundfish FFPs, catching FMP groundfish in the state-waters parallel fisheries; and c) all entities operating vessels fishing for halibut inside three miles of the shore (whether or not they have FFPs).

On June 12, 2014, the Small Business Administration issued an interim final rule revising the small business size standards for several industries effective July 14, 2014 (79 FR 33647, June 12, 2014). The rule increased the size standard for Finfish Fishing from \$19.0 million to \$20.5 million, Shellfish Fishing from \$ 5.0 million to \$5.5 million, and Other Marine Fishing from \$7.0 million to \$7.5 million.

Based on data from 2013 fishing activity, there were 1,156 individual catcher vessel entities with gross revenues meeting small entity criteria. Of these entities, 1,075 used hook-and-line gear, 116 used pot gear, and 33 used trawl gear (some of these entities used more than one gear type, thus the counts of entities using the different gear types do not sum to the total number of entities above). Three individual catcher/processors met the small entity criterion; two used hook-and-line gear, and one used trawl gear. Catcher/processor gross revenues were not reported for confidentiality reasons, however hook-and-line small entities had average gross

revenues of \$380,000, small pot entities had average gross revenues of \$960,000, and small trawl entities had average gross revenues of \$2.8 million.

Some of these vessels are members of AFA inshore pollock cooperatives, of GOA rockfish cooperatives, or of BSAI crab rationalization cooperatives and, therefore, under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) it is the aggregate gross receipts of all participating members of the cooperative that must meet the threshold. Vessels that participate in these cooperatives are considered to be large entities within the meaning of the RFA. These relationships are accounted for, along with corporate affiliations among vessels, to the extent that they are known, in the estimated number of small entities. If affiliations exist of which NMFS is unaware, or if entities had non-fishing revenue sources, the estimates above may overstate the number of directly regulated small entities.

This action does not modify recordkeeping or reporting requirements.

NMFS considered other, alternative harvest strategies when choosing the preferred harvest strategy (Alternative 2) in December 2006. These included the following:

- Alternative 1: Set TACs to produce fishing mortality rates, F , that are equal to maxFABC , unless the sum of the TACs is constrained by the OY established in the FMPs. This is equivalent to setting TACs to produce harvest levels equal to the maximum permissible ABCs, as constrained by OY. The term “ maxFABC ” refers to the maximum permissible value of FABC under Amendment 56 to the groundfish FMPs. Historically, the TAC has been set at or below the ABC, therefore, this alternative represents a likely upper limit for setting the TAC within the OY and ABC limits.
- Alternative 3: For species in Tiers 1, 2, and 3, set TAC to produce F equal to the most recent 5-year average actual F . For species in Tiers 4, 5, and 6, set TAC equal to the

most recent 5-year average actual catch. For stocks with a high level of scientific information, TACs would be set to produce harvest levels equal to the most recent 5-year average actual fishing mortality rates. For stocks with insufficient scientific information, TACs would be set equal to the most recent 5-year average actual catch. This alternative recognizes that for some stocks, catches may fall well below ABCs, and recent average F may provide a better indicator of actual F than FABC does.

- Alternative 4: 1) Set TACs for rockfish species in Tier 3 at F75%. Set TACs for rockfish species in Tier 5 at $F=0.5M$. Set spatially explicit TACs for shortraker and rougheye rockfish in the GOA. 2) Taking the rockfish TACs as calculated above, reduce all other TACs by a proportion that does not vary across species, so that the sum of all TACs, including rockfish TACs, is equal to the lower bound of the area OY (116,000 mt in the GOA). This alternative sets conservative and spatially explicit TACs for rockfish species that are long-lived and late to mature and sets conservative TACs for the other groundfish species.
- Alternative 5: (No Action) Set TACs at zero.

These four alternatives do not meet the objectives of this action although they have a smaller adverse economic impact on small entities than the preferred alternative. The Council rejected these alternatives as harvest strategies in 2006, and the Secretary did so in 2007.

Alternative 1 selected harvest rates that will allow fishermen to harvest stocks at the level of ABCs, unless total harvests are constrained by the upper bound of the GOA OY of 800,000 metric tons. The sums of ABCs in 2015 and 2016 are 685,597 mt and 731,049 mt, respectively. The sums of the TACs in 2015 and 2016 are 536,158 mt and 590,161 mt, respectively. Thus,

although the sum of ABCs in each year is less than 800,000 metric tons, the sums of the TACs in each year are less than the sums of the ABCs.

In most cases, the Council has set TACs equal to ABCs. The divergence between aggregate TACs and aggregate ABCs reflects a variety of special species- and fishery-specific circumstances:

- Pacific cod TACs are set equal to 70 percent in the Western GOA and 75 percent in the Central GOA of the Pacific cod ABCs in each year to account for the guideline harvest levels (GHL) set by the State of Alaska for its GHL Pacific cod fisheries (30 and 25 percent, respectively, of the Western and Central GOA ABCs). Thus, the difference between the Federal TACs and ABCs does not actually reflect a Pacific cod harvest below the Pacific cod ABC, as the balance is available for the State's cod GHL fisheries.
- Shallow-water flatfish and flathead sole TACs are set below ABCs in the Western and Central GOA regulatory areas. Arrowtooth flounder TACs are set below ABC in all GOA regulatory areas. Catches of these flatfish species rarely, if ever, approach the proposed ABCs or TACs. Important trawl fisheries in the GOA take halibut PSC, and are constrained by limits on the allowable halibut PSC mortality. These limits routinely force the closure of trawl fisheries before they have harvested the available groundfish ABC. Thus, actual harvests of groundfish in the GOA routinely fall short of some ABCs and TACs. Markets can also constrain harvests below the TACs, as has been the case with arrowtooth flounder, in the past. These TACs are set to allow for increased harvest opportunities for these targets while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other, more fully utilized, fisheries.
- The other rockfish TAC is set below the ABC in the Southeast Outside district based on several factors. In addition to conservation concerns for the rockfish species in this group,

there is a regulatory prohibition against using trawl gear east of 140° W. longitude. Because most species of other rockfish are caught exclusively with trawl gear, the catch of such species with other gear types, such as hook-and-line, is low. The commercial catch of other rockfish in the Eastern regulatory area, which includes the West Yakutat and Southeast Outside districts, has ranged from approximately 70 mt to 248 mt per year over the last decade.

- The GOA-wide Atka mackerel TAC is set below the ABC. The estimates of survey biomass continue to be unreliable in the GOA. Therefore, the Council recommended and NMFS agrees that the Atka mackerel TAC in the GOA be set at an amount to support incidental catch in other directed fisheries.

Alternative 3 selects harvest rates based on the most recent 5 years of harvest rates (for species in Tiers 1 through 3) or for the most recent 5 years of harvests (for species in Tiers 4 through 6). This alternative is inconsistent with the objectives of this action, because it does not take account of the most recent biological information for this fishery.

Alternative 4 would lead to significantly lower harvests of all species to reduce TACs from the upper end of the OY range in the GOA to its lower end of 116,000 mt. Overall, this would reduce 2015 TACs by about 78 percent. This would lead to significant reductions in harvests of species by small entities. While production declines in the GOA would undoubtedly be associated with price increases in the GOA, these increases would still be constrained by the availability of substitutes, and are very unlikely to offset revenue declines from smaller production. Thus, this action would have a detrimental economic impact on small entities.

Alternative 5, which sets all harvests equal to zero, may also address conservation issues, but would have a significant adverse economic impact on small entities.

Impacts on marine mammals resulting from fishing activities conducted under this rule are discussed in the EIS and SIR (see ADDRESSES).

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness for this rule because delaying this rule would be contrary to the public interest. The Plan Team review occurred in November 2014, and Council consideration and recommendations occurred in December 2014. Accordingly, NMFS' review could not begin until January 2015. For all fisheries not currently closed because the TACs established under the final 2014 and 2015 harvest specifications (79 FR 12890, March 6, 2014) were not reached, it is possible that they would be closed prior to the expiration of a 30-day delayed effectiveness period, because their TACs could be reached within that period. If implemented immediately, this rule would allow these fisheries to continue because the new TACs implemented by this rule are higher than the ones under which they are currently fishing.

Certain fisheries, such as those for pollock and Pacific cod, are intensive, fast-paced fisheries. Other fisheries, such as those for sablefish, flatfish, rockfish, Atka mackerel, skates, sculpins, sharks, squids, and octopuses, are critical as directed fisheries and as incidental catch in other fisheries. U.S. fishing vessels have demonstrated the capacity to catch the TAC allocations in many of these fisheries. If this rule allowed for a 30-day delay in effectiveness and if a TAC were reached during those 30 days, NMFS would close directed fishing or prohibit retention for the applicable species. Any delay in allocating the final TACs in these fisheries would cause confusion to the industry and potential economic harm through unnecessary discards, thus undermining the intent of the rule. Waiving the 30-day delay allows NMFS to prevent economic loss to fishermen that could otherwise occur should the 2015 TACs be reached. Determining which fisheries may close is impossible because these fisheries are affected by several factors

that cannot be predicted in advance, including fishing effort, weather, movement of fishery stocks, and market price. Furthermore, the closure of one fishery has a cascading effect on other fisheries by freeing-up fishing vessels, allowing them to move from closed fisheries to open ones, increasing the fishing capacity in those open fisheries, and causing them to close at an accelerated pace.

In fisheries subject to declining sideboard limits, a failure to implement the updated sideboard limits before initial season's end could deny the intended economic protection to the non-sideboarded sectors. Conversely, in fisheries with increasing sideboard limits, economic benefit could be denied to the sideboard limited sectors.

If the final harvest specifications are not effective by March 14, 2015, which is the start of the 2015 Pacific halibut season as specified by the IPHC, the hook-and-line sablefish fishery will not begin concurrently with the Pacific halibut IFQ season. This would result in confusion for the industry and economic harm from unnecessary discard of sablefish that are caught along with Pacific halibut, as both hook-and-line sablefish and Pacific halibut are managed under the same IFQ program. Immediate effectiveness of the final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications will allow the sablefish IFQ fishery to begin concurrently with the Pacific halibut IFQ season.

In addition, the immediate effectiveness of this action is required to provide consistent management and conservation of fishery resources based on the best available scientific information. This is particularly true for those species that have lower 2015 ABCs and TACs than those established in the 2014 and 2015 harvest specifications (79 FR 12890, March 6, 2014). Immediate effectiveness also would give the fishing industry the earliest possible opportunity to plan and conduct its fishing operations with respect to new information about

TACs. Therefore, NMFS finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

Small Entity Compliance Guide

This final rule is a plain language guide to assist small entities in complying with this final rule as required by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This final rule's primary purpose is to announce the final 2015 and 2016 harvest specifications and prohibited species bycatch allowances for the groundfish fisheries of the GOA. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits and associated management measures for groundfish during the 2015 and 2016 fishing years, and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the FMP. This action affects all fishermen who participate in the GOA fisheries. The specific amounts of OFL, ABC, TAC, and PSC are provided in tables to assist the reader. NMFS will announce closures of directed fishing in the Federal Register and information bulletins released by the Alaska Region. Affected fishermen should keep themselves informed of such closures.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 et seq.; 16 U.S.C. 1540 (f), 1801 et seq.; 16 U.S.C. 3631 et seq.; Pub. L. 105-277; Pub. L. 106-31; Pub. L. 106-554; Pub. L. 108-199; Pub. L. 108-447; Pub. L. 109-241; Pub. L. 109-479.

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Samuel D. Rauch III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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