



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No.: 260305-0067]

RTID 0648-XF288

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Gulf of Alaska; 2026 and 2027 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 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications,
apportionments, and Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits for the
groundfish fishery of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to establish
harvest limits for groundfish during the remainder of 2026 and the start of the 2027
fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan
for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP). 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 (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

DATES: Harvest specifications and closures are effective from 1200 hours, Alaska local
time (A.l.t.), March 17, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

ADDRESSES: Electronic copies of the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final
Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS), Record of Decision (ROD), and the annual
Supplementary Information Reports (SIRs) to the Final EIS prepared for this action are
available at: <https://www.regulations.gov>. The 2024 Stock Assessment and Fishery
Evaluation (SAFE) report for the groundfish resources of the GOA, the 2025 harvest

projection for the deep-water flatfish stock complex, the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment, and the SAFE reports for previous years are available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at 1007 West Third Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501, phone 907-271-2809, or from the NMFS website at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/north-pacific-groundfish-stock-assessments-and-fishery-evaluation>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Abby Jahn, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the GOA groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the GOA under the FMP. The Council prepared the FMP, which NMFS approved and implemented, under the authority of the 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 that NMFS, after consultation with the Council, 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) (§ 679.20(a)(1)(i)(B) and (a)(2)). Section 679.20(c)(1) further requires that NMFS publish and solicit public comment on proposed annual TACs and apportionments thereof for each target species, Pacific halibut PSC limits, and seasonal allowances of pollock and Pacific cod. Upon consideration of those public comments, NMFS will publish a notification of final harvest specifications in the **Federal Register**; the final harvest specifications specify annual TACs and apportionments, Pacific halibut PSC limits, and seasonal allowances of pollock and Pacific cod (§ 679.20(c)(3)(i)-(ii)). The final harvest specifications set forth in tables 1 through 27 of this rule reflect the outcome of this process, as required by § 679.20(c).

The proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA and Pacific halibut PSC limits were published in the **Federal Register** on December 16,

2025 (90 FR 58185). Comments were invited and accepted through January 5, 2026.

Three comment letters were received during the comment period and no changes were made in response to the comments. NMFS's responses are included in the **Comments and Responses** section of this rule.

Under § 679.20(c)(3), NMFS is publishing the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications after: (1) considering comments received within the comment period (see **DATES**); (2) consulting with the Council at its December 2025 and February 2026 meetings; (3) considering information presented in the 2026 SIR to the Final EIS that assesses the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS (see **ADDRESSES**); and (4) considering information presented in the final 2024 SAFE report (including the 2024 Ecosystem Status Report (ESR) for the GOA), the abbreviated updated 2025 GOA ESR, the 2025 harvest projection of the deep-water flatfish stock complex, and the 2025 operational update assessment for Pacific cod, among other relevant information. The final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027. For the 2026 calendar year, the sum of the TACs is 470,482 mt. For the 2027 calendar year, the sum of the TACs is 465,697 mt.

Other Actions Affecting the 2026 and 2027 Harvest Specifications

In October 2025, the Alaska Board of Fisheries, which manages fisheries in State of Alaska (State) waters, adopted a proposal to increase the South Alaska Peninsula guideline harvest level (GHL) from 30 to 35 percent. This action affects the available Pacific cod TAC in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA (Western GOA) and subsequent sectors whose allocations are derived from the Western GOA TAC because the TAC is adjusted to account for the GHL amount. This change is reflected in the Pacific cod TAC and allocations for the Western GOA in this rule.

Harvest Specifications Process

The specifications are based on the most recent biological, ecosystem, socioeconomic, and harvest information about the condition of the GOA groundfish stocks and the review and recommendations of the GOA Groundfish Plan Team (Plan Team), Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Advisory Panel (AP), and the Council. These specifications were developed in compliance with the harvest strategy from the FMP and the Final EIS and ROD.

The most recent reviewed information available to inform these specifications includes the 2024 SAFE report for the GOA groundfish stocks, the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment, and the 2025 harvest projection for the deep-water flatfish stock complex (see **ADDRESSES**). The stock assessments that comprise the SAFE report contain a review of the latest scientific analyses available and estimates of each stock or stock complex's biomass and other biological parameters including stock projections for 2026 and possible future condition of the stocks, and the SAFE report also contains summaries of the available information on the GOA ecosystem and the economic condition of the GOA groundfish fisheries off Alaska. The SAFE report provides information to the Council and NMFS for recommending and setting annual harvest levels for each stock and stock complex and documenting significant trends or changes in the resource, marine ecosystems, and fisheries over time. The individual stock assessments that comprise the 2024 SAFE report, as well as the 2025 harvest projection for deep-water flatfish and 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment, are available at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/north-pacific-groundfish-stock-assessment-and-fishery-evaluation>.

The ESRs are a component of the SAFE report. The ESRs compile and summarize information about the status of the Alaska marine ecosystems for the Plan Team, SSC, AP, Council, NMFS, and the public, and are updated annually. The ESRs

include ecosystem report cards, ecosystem assessments, and ecosystem-based management indicators (*e.g.*, climate indices, sea surface temperature), which together provide context for ecosystem-based fisheries management in Alaska. The ESRs inform stock assessments and are integrated into the annual harvest recommendations through inclusion in stock assessments, including stock-specific risk tables that identify considerations informing any additional scientific uncertainty relevant to the specification of ABC. The ESR information provides context for the SSC's recommendations for OFLs and ABCs, as well as for the Council's TAC recommendations. The SAFE reports and the ESRs are typically presented at the October and December Council meetings before the SSC, AP, and the Council for making groundfish harvest specification recommendations and aid NMFS in implementing these annual groundfish harvest specifications.

In September 2025, the Plan Team met and recommended proposed harvest specifications for 2026 and 2027 based on the 2024 SAFE report. In October 2025, the SSC reviewed these recommendations and other relevant information available, including an ESR preview, and made recommendations on proposed OFLs and ABCs to the Council. After reviewing the recommendations and information provided, the Council recommended proposed 2026 and 2027 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs in October 2025, and NMFS published the proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA for public comment on December 16, 2025 (90 FR 58185). The proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications were based on the 2024 SAFE report and on the final 2026 specifications that were reviewed by the Plan Team, SSC, and the Council in 2024 and published in the **Federal Register** on March 18, 2025 (90 FR 12468).

NMFS was unable to prepare new stock assessments that were scheduled for updates this year for the 2025 SAFE report, and the November Groundfish Plan Team meetings were canceled since there were no updated stock assessments to review at that

time. The 2025 SAFE report and 2025 GOA ESR were not presented at the December Council meeting.

At the December Council meeting, the SSC used the best scientific information available to make recommendations on final 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs. This information included: the 2024 stock assessments (which already included projected OFLs and ABCs for 2026) and the stock-specific risk tables included with those assessments; the 2025 harvest projection for the deep-water flatfish stock complex; Plan Team recommendations from its 2024 and September 2025 meetings; catch reports for each stock and stock complex comparing recent catch data to TACs, ABCs, and OFLs; tables summarizing relevant information on groundfish stocks and stock complexes that included biomass and survey trends; information available from the 2025 Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) surveys; and available ESR information that included the 2024 ESRs and the ESR previews presented to Plan Team and SSC in September and October 2025, respectively. Also included were updated OFL and ABC recommendations for deep-water flatfish, which was subject to a harvest projection that underwent review by the Plan Team in September 2025 and the SSC in October 2025, consistent with the schedule for reviewing harvest projections. More information on the SSC's review is provided in the December 2025 report at:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=74322a78-4de1-451c-a10f-13b11286f8b9.pdf&fileName=Draft%20SSC%20Report%20Dec%202025.pdf>

The Council then reviewed this information and the SSC's recommendations for OFLs and ABCs, as well as the AP's recommendations for TACs, and recommended final 2026 and 2027 TACs. At the December 2025 Council meeting, the Council also requested that the AFSC update the Pacific cod stock assessment and provide the assessment to the Plan Team for review during a public meeting scheduled for early 2026. In January 2026, the Plan Team reviewed the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment,

including an updated risk table, and also heard a presentation on an updated Ecosystem and Socioeconomic Profile (ESP) for Pacific cod and an updated abbreviated 2025 GOA-wide ESR, which focused on relevant ecosystem indicators informative for Pacific cod. The Plan Team then made OFL and ABC recommendations for Pacific cod based on the updated information available, including the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment.

At the February 2026 Council meeting, the SSC reviewed the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment, ESP, and abbreviated 2025 GOA ESR and the Plan Team's recommendations, and then recommended OFL and ABC for Pacific cod. The Council then recommended a 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TAC based on the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations.

The 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs are based on the best available biological and scientific information, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised technical methods used to calculate stock biomass. The FMP specifies the tiers to be used to calculate OFLs and ABCs. The tier applicable to a particular stock or stock complex is determined by the level of reliable information available to the fisheries scientists. This information is categorized into a successive series of six tiers to define OFLs and ABCs, with tier 1 representing the highest level of information quality available and tier 6 representing the lowest level of information quality available. In 2024, the Plan Team used the FMP tier structure to calculate OFLs and ABCs for each groundfish species for 2025 and 2026. In December 2025, the SSC adopted the 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs that were recommended as proposed specifications by the Plan Team for all groundfish species in September 2025 and the SSC in October 2025, with the exception of deep-water flatfish and Pacific cod. Because the 2024 SAFE report does not set OFLs and ABCs for 2027, the SSC set the 2027 OFLs and ABCs equal to 2026. These 2027 OFLs and ABCs will be superseded by the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications.

The 2026 and 2027 TACs are based on the best available biological and socioeconomic information consistent with § 679.20(a)(3). In making its recommendations, the Council adopted the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations and the AP's TAC recommendations for all stocks and stock complexes. The AP and Council recommended that the 2026 and 2027 TACs be set equal to the proposed ABCs for all stocks and stock complexes, with the exception of the stocks and stock complexes discussed below.

NMFS reviewed the recommendations of the SSC and Council for OFLs, ABCs, and TACs for stocks and stock complexes in the GOA as well as any other relevant information. Based on that review, NMFS is implementing the OFLs, ABCs, and TACs set forth in the tables of this rule, which are consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the FMP, and other applicable law. NMFS finds that the recommended OFLs and ABCs are consistent with the biological condition of the groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report, 2025 harvest projection of deep-water flatfish, and 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment and in consideration of ecosystem information presented in the ESRs.

NMFS also finds that the Council's recommendations for TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations, including maintaining the sum of all TACs within the OY range (§ 679.20(a)(2) and 679.20(a)(3)). The TACs are set equal to sub-area apportionments of ABCs for all stocks and stock complexes except for pollock in the combined Western and Central Regulatory Areas and the West Yakutat District of the Eastern Regulatory Area (W/C/WYK), Pacific cod, Western GOA shallow-water flatfish, Western GOA arrowtooth flounder, Western GOA flathead sole, Southeast Outside (SEO) District other rockfish, Atka mackerel, and octopus. The combined W/C/WYK pollock TAC, the Pacific cod TACs, and the octopus TAC are set to account for the State's GHUs so that the ABCs for pollock, Pacific cod, and octopus are not exceeded.

The Western GOA shallow-water flatfish, Western GOA arrowtooth flounder, and Western GOA 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 SEO District is set to reduce the amount of discards of the species in that complex. The Atka mackerel TAC is set to accommodate incidental catch amounts (ICA) in other fisheries. NMFS reviewed the Council's recommended TACs and apportionments, and NMFS approves these harvest specifications under § 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 2026 and 2027 OFLs, ABCs, TACs, and area apportionments of groundfish in the GOA. The 2026 harvest specifications set in this final action supersede the 2026 harvest specifications previously set in the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications (90 FR 12468, March 18, 2025). Pursuant to this final action, the 2026 harvest specifications are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026, and the 2027 harvest specifications are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Specification and Apportionment of TAC Amounts

The W/C/WYK pollock TAC and the Pacific cod TACs are set to account for the GHLS for the State waters pollock and Pacific cod fisheries so that the ABCs are not exceeded. The GOA-wide octopus TAC accounts for the GHLS of 16 mt (35,000 lbs rounded). These reductions for pollock and Pacific cod are described below. NMFS's apportionments of groundfish stocks are based on the distribution of biomass among the regulatory areas over which NMFS manages the stocks. Additional regulations govern the apportionment of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish. Additional detail on apportionments of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish are described below.

The 2026 and 2027 TAC for the pollock stock in the combined W/C/WYK Regulatory Area is set to account for the GHL established by the State for the State waters Prince William Sound (PWS) pollock fishery. The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council have recommended that the sum of all pollock removals from State and Federal waters in the GOA not exceed ABC recommendations. State fisheries managers set the PWS GHL at 2.5 percent of the annual W/C/WYK pollock ABC. For 2026 and 2027, this yields a projected PWS pollock GHL of 3,326 mt, a percent decrease of 26.51 from the 2025 PWS GHL of 4,526 mt. After reductions for the PWS GHL, the remaining 2026 and 2027 W/C/WYK pollock TAC is then apportioned among four statistical areas (areas 610, 620, 630, and 640), as described below and detailed in tables 1 and 2. The total TACs for the four statistical areas, plus the State GHL, do not exceed the W/C/WYK pollock ABC. For 2026 and 2027, the W/C/WYK pollock ABC is 133,075 mt, and the TAC is 129,749 mt.

Apportionments of pollock to the W/C/WYK management areas are considered to be apportionments of the TAC. This more accurately reflects that such apportionments address management concerns, rather than biological or conservation concerns. In addition, apportionments in this manner allow NMFS to balance any transfer of TAC among areas 610, 620, and 630 pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B) to ensure that the ABC, annual catch limit (ACL), and total TAC for the stock (W/C/WYK pollock) are not exceeded.

NMFS establishes pollock TACs in the Western GOA (area 610), Central Regulatory Area of the GOA (Central GOA) (areas 620 and 630), the West Yakutat (WYK) District (area 640), and the SEO District (area 650) of the GOA (see table 1). NMFS also establishes seasonal apportionment of the annual pollock TAC in the Western GOA and Central GOA among statistical areas 610, 620, and 630. These apportionments are divided equally among the following two seasons: the A season (January 20 through

May 31); and the B season (September 1 through November 1) (§§ 679.23(d)(2) and 679.20(a)(5)(iv)). Additional detail is provided below in tables 3 and 4.

The 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs are set to account for the State's GHGs for Pacific cod in State waters in the Western GOA and Central GOA, as well as in PWS (in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA (Eastern GOA)) (see tables 1 and 2). The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council recommended that the sum of all Pacific cod removals from State and Federal waters in the GOA do not exceed ABC recommendations. Accordingly, the Council recommended the 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs in the Western GOA, Central GOA, and Eastern GOA account for State GHGs. The 2026 Pacific cod TACs are adjusted by the following amounts: (1) Western GOA, 3,604 mt; (2) Central GOA, 7,183 mt; and (3) Eastern GOA, 680 mt. The 2026 TACs reflect the State's 2026 GHGs in these areas, which are 35 percent for the Western GOA, 25 percent for the Central GOA, and 27 percent for the Eastern GOA. Typically, the Eastern GOA GHG is set at 25 percent. This year, since the fishery was already in operation for the A season, the State requested a GHG increase to approximately 27 percent, and the Council recommended the TAC for the Eastern GOA account for the State GHG amount (680 mt) based on the Council's previous TAC recommendations to maintain consistency for a fishery that is already occurring. This modification is not necessary for 2027. The 2027 Pacific cod TACs are adjusted by the following amounts: (1) Western GOA, 2,795 mt; (2) Central GOA, 5,572 mt; and (3) Eastern GOA, 483 mt. The 2027 TACs reflect the State's 2027 GHGs in these areas, which are 35 percent for the Western GOA and 25 percent for the Central GOA and Eastern GOA.

The Western GOA and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs are allocated among various gear and operational sectors. NMFS also establishes seasonal apportionments of the annual Pacific cod TACs in the Western GOA and Central GOA. The Pacific cod

sector allocations and seasonal apportionments are discussed in detail in a subsequent section and in tables 5 and 6 of this rule.

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 GOA (§ 679.7(b)(1)) and makes available 5 percent of the Eastern GOA (WYK and SEO Districts combined) TAC to vessels using trawl gear for use as incidental catch in other trawl groundfish fisheries in the WYK District (§ 679.20(a)(4)(i)). Additional details are provided below. Tables 7 and 8 list the 2026 and 2027 allocations of the sablefish TAC in the GOA.

For 2026 and 2027, the Council recommends, and NMFS implements, the OFLs, ABCs, and TACs listed in tables 1 and 2. These amounts are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report, 2025 harvest projection for deep-water flatfish, and the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment. The ABCs reflect harvest amounts that are less than the specified OFLs. The TACs are adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations consistent with § 679.20(a)(3) and do not exceed the ABCs. The sum of the TACs for all GOA groundfish is 470,482 mt for 2026 and 465,697 mt for 2027. The sum of TACs for both 2026 and 2027 are within the OY range specified by the FMP and implementing regulations.

Changes in TACs from the Proposed 2026 and 2027 Harvest Specifications in the GOA

In November of each year, the Plan Team typically updates the SAFE report to include new information collected, such as NMFS surveys, revised stock assessments (drafted by stock assessment authors), and catch data. This past November, there was a disruption in the completion of the stock assessments that were scheduled for update in 2025. The stock assessments were not completed in time for the Plan Team's meeting in November, and the Plan Team was unable to meet to review, update, and finalize the

2025 SAFE report. However, the harvest projection and 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs for deep-water flatfish were reviewed by the Plan Team in September 2025 and the SSC in October 2025, consistent with the schedule for review of stocks with a harvest projection. In addition, the 2025 operational update stock assessment and 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs for Pacific cod were reviewed by the Plan Team during a January 2026 meeting and by the SSC in February 2026.

At the September 2025 Plan Team meeting, NMFS scientists presented updated and new survey results and a preview of ecosystem status information for the ESRs. Scientists also discussed potential changes to assessment models and accompanying preliminary stock estimates. Consistent with the schedule for review of one type of assessment (a harvest projection), the Plan Team reviewed the harvest projection for deep-water flatfish. At the October 2025 Council meeting, the SSC reviewed this information as well. Typically, the Plan Team would then review at the November Plan Team meeting survey results, model changes, and updated stock assessments for groundfish stocks (consistent with the schedule for review of those stock assessments), which the SSC would then review, along with the Plan Team recommendations, at the December SSC meeting. Model changes based on SSC recommendations often result in changes to final OFLs, ABCs, and TACs. This year, however, there are limited changes between the proposed and final specifications because no updated stock assessments were prepared and so no model changes or additional review were completed by the Plan Team in November 2025.

The final 2026 TACs are higher than the proposed 2026 TACs for Pacific cod and deep-water flatfish in 2026 due to the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment and deep-water flatfish harvest projection, respectively. The final 2027 TAC for Pacific cod is higher than the proposed 2027 TAC due to the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment. The final 2027 TAC for deep-water flatfish is lower than the proposed 2027 TAC for deep-water

flatfish due to the harvest projection. The final 2026 and 2027 TAC for octopus is lower than the proposed 2026 and 2027 TAC to account for GHGs set in State waters. These changes are compared in table A. For the remaining target species, the Council recommended final 2026 and 2027 TACs that are the same as the proposed 2026 and 2027 TACs.

Table A -- Stocks or stock complexes with differences between Proposed and Final 2026 and 2027 GOA TAC Limits [Values are rounded to the nearest mt and percent difference]

Stock or stock complex	2026 and 2027 proposed TAC	2026 final TAC	Difference between 2026 proposed and final TACs	Percent difference	2027 final TAC	Difference between 2027 proposed and final TACs	Percent difference
Pacific cod	22,235	30,053	7,818	35.16	23,359	1,124	4.93
Deep-water flatfish	6,832	6,836	4	0.06	6,697	135	2
Octopus	964	932	32	3.31	932	32	3.31

The final OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report, the 2025 harvest projection for deep-water flatfish, and the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment. The final TACs are adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations consistent with § 679.20(a)(3). These TACs are specified in compliance with the harvest strategy from the FMP and the Final EIS and ROD and as described in the proposed and final rules for the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

The final 2026 and 2027 TAC amounts for the GOA are within the OY range established for the GOA and do not exceed the ABC for any stock or stock complex. The ABC does not exceed the OFL for any stock or stock complex. Tables 1 and 2 list the final OFL, ABC, and TAC amounts for GOA groundfish for 2026 and 2027, respectively.

Table 1 -- Final 2026 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs of Groundfish for the Western/Central/West Yakutat, Western, Central, Eastern Regulatory Areas, the West Yakutat and SEO Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, and Gulf-wide Districts of the GOA [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Stock or stock complex	Area ¹	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock ²	Shumagin (610)		27,453	27,453
	Chirikof (620)		60,477	60,477
	Kodiak (630)		37,936	37,936
	WYK (640)		3,883	3,883
	W/C/WYK (subtotal)	153,971	133,075	129,749
	SEO (650)	12,998	9,749	9,749
Pacific Cod ³	W		10,297	6,693
	C		28,732	21,549
	E		2,491	1,811
	Total	49,782	41,520	30,053
Sablefish ⁴	W		4,687	4,687
	C		9,622	9,622
	WYK		2,652	2,652
	SEO		5,589	5,589
	Subtotal TAC			22,550
	Total	57,797	47,008	
Shallow-water flatfish ⁵	W		23,902	13,250
	C		28,455	28,455
	WYK		2,846	2,846
	SEO		1,707	1,707
	Total	69,610	56,910	46,258
Deep-water Flatfish ⁶	W		231	231
	C		2,570	2,570
	WYK		1,796	1,796
	SEO		2,239	2,239
	Total	8,118	6,836	6,836
Rex sole	W		3,353	3,353
	C		13,582	13,582
	WYK		1,413	1,413
	SEO		2,825	2,825
	Total	25,743	21,173	21,173
Arrowtooth flounder	W		33,716	14,500
	C		68,511	68,511
	WYK		6,719	6,719
	SEO		11,039	11,039
	Total	143,347	119,985	100,769
Flathead sole	W		13,757	8,650
	C		22,083	22,083
	WYK		4,018	4,018
	SEO		2,122	2,122
	Total	51,176	41,980	36,873
Pacific ocean perch ⁷	W		1,688	1,688
	C		27,156	27,156
	WYK		1,993	1,993
	SEO		6,672	6,672
	Total	44,826	37,509	37,509
Northern rockfish ⁸	W		1,346	1,346
	C		3,549	3,549
	E			0
	Total	5,848	4,895	4,895
Shortraker rockfish ⁹	W		34	34
	C		189	189
	E		424	424
	Total	863	647	647
Dusky rockfish ¹⁰	W		199	199
	C		5,527	5,527

	WYK		204	204
	SEO		91	91
	Total	7,319	6,021	6,021
Rougheye/Blackspotted rockfish ¹¹	W		229	229
	C		366	366
	E		608	608
	Total	1,631	1,203	1,203
Demersal shelf rockfish ¹²	W/C/WYK	361	271	271
	SEO	524	394	394
Thornyhead rockfish ¹³	W		206	206
	C		590	590
	E		542	542
	Total	1,784	1,338	1,338
Other rockfish ¹⁴	W/C/WYK		1,084	1,084
	SEO		2,421	300
	Total	4,618	3,505	1,384
Atka mackerel	GW	6,200	4,700	3,000
Big skate ¹⁵	W		745	745
	C		1,749	1,749
	E		341	341
	Total	3,780	2,835	2,835
Longnose skate ¹⁶	W		104	104
	C		1,894	1,894
	E		538	538
	Total	3,380	2,536	2,536
Other skates ¹⁷	GW	887	665	665
Sharks	GW	6,521	4,891	4,891
Octopuses	GW	1,307	980	932
Total	Total	662,391	550,626	470,482

¹ Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2. (W = Western GOA; C = Central GOA; E = Eastern GOA; GW = Gulf-wide). The 2026 harvest specifications are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

² The total for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas pollock ABC is 133,075. After deducting 2.5 percent (3,326 mt) of that ABC for the State's pollock GHL fishery, the remaining amount of 129,749 mt (for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas) is apportioned among four statistical areas (areas 610, 620, 630, and 640). The TACs in areas 610, 620, and 630 are further divided by season, as detailed in table 3. In the WYK (area 640) and SEO (area 650) districts of the Eastern GOA, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.

³ The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned, after seasonal apportionment to the jig sector, as follows: (1) 63.84 percent to the A season and 36.16 percent to the B season; and (2) 64.16 percent to the A season and 35.84 percent to the B season in the Western GOA and Central GOA, respectively. The Pacific cod TAC in the Eastern GOA is allocated 90 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component and 10 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component. Table 5 lists the final 2026 Pacific cod seasonal apportionments and sector allocations.

⁴ The sablefish OFL and ABC are set Alaska-wide (57,797 mt and 47,008 mt, respectively), and the GOA sablefish TAC is 22,550 mt. Table 7 lists the final 2026 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 deep-sea sole.

⁷ "Pacific ocean perch" means *Sebastes alutus*.

⁸ "Northern rockfish" means *Sebastes polyspinis*. For management purposes, the 1 mt apportionment of ABC to the WYK District of the Eastern GOA has been included in the other rockfish species group.

⁹ "Shortraker rockfish" means *Sebastes borealis*.

¹⁰ "Dusky rockfish" means *Sebastes variabilis*.

¹¹ "Rougheye and blackspotted 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 “Thornyhead rockfish” means *Sebastolobus* species.

¹⁴ “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* (silvergray), *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 *S. polyspinous* (northern rockfish).

¹⁵ “Big skates” means *Beringraja binoculata*.

¹⁶ “Longnose skates” means *Raja rhina*.

¹⁷ “Other skates” means *Bathyraja*.

Table 2 -- Final 2027 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs of Groundfish for the Western/Central/West Yakutat, Western, Central, Eastern Regulatory Areas, the West Yakutat and SEO Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, and Gulf-wide Districts of the GOA [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Species	Area ¹	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock ²	Shumagin (610)		27,453	27,453
	Chirikof (620)		60,477	60,477
	Kodiak (630)		37,936	37,936
	WYK (640)		3,883	3,883
	W/C/WYK (subtotal)	153,971	133,075	129,749
	SEO (650)	12,998	9,749	9,749
Pacific Cod ³	W		7,987	5,192
	C		22,289	16,717
	E		1,933	1,450
	Total	38,812	32,209	23,359
Sablefish ⁴	W		4,687	4,687
	C		9,622	9,622
	WYK		2,652	2,652
	SEO		5,589	5,589
	Subtotal TAC			22,550
	Total	57,797	47,008	
Shallow-water flatfish ⁵	W		23,902	13,250
	C		28,455	28,455
	WYK		2,846	2,846
	SEO		1,707	1,707
	Total	69,610	56,910	46,258
Deep-water Flatfish ⁶	W		227	227
	C		2,518	2,518
	WYK		1,759	1,759
	SEO		2,193	2,193
	Total	7,954	6,697	6,697
Rex sole	W		3,353	3,353
	C		13,582	13,582
	WYK		1,413	1,413
	SEO		2,825	2,825
	Total	25,743	21,173	21,173
Arrowtooth flounder	W		33,716	14,500
	C		68,511	68,511
	WYK		6,719	6,719
	SEO		11,039	11,039
	Total	143,347	119,985	100,769
Flathead sole	W		13,757	8,650
	C		22,083	22,083
	WYK		4,018	4,018
	SEO		2,122	2,122

	Total	51,176	41,980	36,873
Pacific ocean perch ⁷	W		1,688	1,688
	C		27,156	27,156
	WYK		1,993	1,993
	SEO		6,672	6,672
	Total	44,826	37,509	37,509
Northern rockfish ⁸	W		1,346	1,346
	C		3,549	3,549
	E			0
	Total	5,848	4,895	4,895
Shortraker rockfish ⁹	W		34	34
	C		189	189
	E		424	424
	Total	863	647	647
Dusky rockfish ¹⁰	W		199	199
	C		5,527	5,527
	WYK		204	204
	SEO		91	91
Rougheye/Blackspotted rockfish ¹¹	Total	7,319	6,021	6,021
	W		229	229
	C		366	366
	E		608	608
Demersal shelf rockfish ¹²	Total	1,631	1,203	1,203
	W/C/WYK	361	271	271
	SEO	524	394	394
Thornyhead rockfish ¹³	W		206	206
	C		590	590
	E		542	542
	Total	1,784	1,338	1,338
Other rockfish ¹⁴	W/C/WYK		1,084	1,084
	SEO		2,421	300
	Total	4,618	3,505	1,384
Atka mackerel	GW	6,200	4,700	3,000
Big skate ¹⁵	W		745	745
	C		1,749	1,749
	E		341	341
	Total	3,780	2,835	2,835
Longnose skate ¹⁶	W		104	104
	C		1,894	1,894
	E		538	538
	Total	3,380	2,536	2,536
Other skates ¹⁷	GW	887	665	665
Sharks	GW	6,521	4,891	4,891
Octopuses	GW	1,307	980	932
Total	Total	651,257	541,176	465,697

¹ Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2. (W = Western GOA; C = Central GOA; E = Eastern GOA; GW = Gulf-wide). The 2027 harvest specifications are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

² The total for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas pollock ABC is 133,075. After deducting 2.5 percent (3,326 mt) of that ABC for the State's pollock GHL fishery, the remaining amount of 129,749 mt (for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas) is apportioned among four statistical areas (areas 610, 620, 630, and 640). The TACs in areas 610, 620, and 630 are further divided by season, as detailed in table 4. In the WYK (area 640) and SEO (area 650) Districts of the Eastern GOA, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.

³ The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned, after seasonal apportionment to the jig sector, as follows: (1) 63.84 percent to the A season and 36.16 percent to the B season; and (2) 64.16 percent to the A season and 35.84 percent to the B season in the Western GOA and Central GOA, respectively. The Pacific cod TAC in the Eastern GOA is allocated 90 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for

processing by the inshore component and 10 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component. Table 6 lists the final 2027 Pacific cod seasonal apportionments and sector allocations.

⁴ The sablefish OFL and ABC are set Alaska-wide (57,797 mt and 47,008 mt, respectively), and the GOA sablefish TAC is 22,550 mt. Additionally, allocations of sablefish TACs for 2027 are specified for trawl gear only, and the sablefish TACs allocated to fixed gear for 2027 will be specified in the 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications. Table 8 lists the final 2027 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 deep-sea sole.

⁷ “Pacific ocean perch” means *Sebastes alutus*.

⁸ “Northern rockfish” means *Sebastes polyspinis*. For management purposes, the 1 mt apportionment of ABC to the WYK District of the Eastern GOA has been included in the other rockfish species group.

⁹ “Shortraker rockfish” means *Sebastes borealis*.

¹⁰ “Dusky rockfish” means *Sebastes variabilis*.

¹¹ “Rougheye and blackspotted 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 “Thornyhead rockfish” means *Sebastolobus* species.

¹⁴ “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* (silvergray), *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 *S. polyspinous* (northern rockfish).

¹⁵ “Big skates” means *Beringraja binoculata*.

¹⁶ “Longnose skates” means *Raja rhina*.

¹⁷ “Other skates” means *Bathyraja*.

Apportionment of Reserves

Section 679.20(b)(2) requires NMFS to set aside 20 percent of each TAC for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sharks, and octopuses in reserve for possible apportionment at a later date during the fishing year. For 2026 and 2027, NMFS proposed reapportionment of all the reserves in the proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications published in the **Federal Register** on December 16, 2025 (90 FR 58185). NMFS did not receive any public comments on the proposed reapportionments. For the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications, NMFS reapportions, as proposed, all the 2026 and 2027 reserves for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sharks, and octopuses back to the original TAC limit from which the reserve was derived (§ 679.20(b)(3)). This is because NMFS expects, based on recent harvest patterns, that such reserves are not necessary or that the entire TAC for each of these stocks and stock complexes will be caught. The TACs listed in tables 1 and 2 reflect reapportionments of the reserve amounts to the original TAC

limit for these stocks and stock complexes (*i.e.*, each final TAC for the above-mentioned stocks and stock complexes contains the full TAC recommended by the Council).

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.

Pollock TACs in the Western GOA and Central GOA are apportioned among statistical areas 610, 620, and 630 in proportion to the distribution of pollock biomass determined by the most recent NMFS surveys, pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(A).

Although there was a survey in 2025 for the GOA (surveys in the GOA are scheduled for every 2 years), the survey results were not incorporated into the pollock stock assessment due to a disruption in the completion of the stock assessments and is therefore unavailable for determining the proportional distribution of pollock biomass by statistical areas. In lieu of a 2025 stock assessment, the pollock chapter of the 2024 SAFE report (see **ADDRESSES**), which incorporates the 2023 survey, was used to determine the proportional distribution of pollock biomass because it contains a comprehensive description of apportionments that are based on the most recent information available at the time that stock assessment was prepared. Pollock is specified for the A and B seasons for the Western GOA and Central GOA. However, the GOA pollock stock assessment continues to use a four-season methodology to determine pollock distribution in the Western GOA and Central GOA to maintain continuity in the historical pollock apportionment timeseries. A and B seasons from the assessment are aggregated into the A season, and C and D seasons from the assessment are aggregated into the B season, for the purposes of apportioning TAC among statistical areas 610, 620, and 630 in these specifications. This method is described and calculated in the 2024 GOA pollock assessment.

Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B), the annual pollock TAC specified for the Western GOA and Central GOA is apportioned into two seasonal allowances of 50 percent. As established by § 679.23(d)(2), the A and B season allowances are available from January 20 through May 31 and September 1 through November 1, respectively. Within any fishing year, the amount by which a pollock seasonal allowance is under harvested or overharvested may be added to, or subtracted from, the subsequent seasonal allowance for the Western GOA and Central GOA 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 TAC 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 and in an amount that is no more than 20 percent of the seasonal TAC apportionment in those statistical areas (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B)). The pollock TACs in the WYK and the SEO Districts for 2026 and 2027 are 3,883 mt and 9,749 mt, respectively. The pollock TACs in the WYK and SEO Districts are not allocated seasonally.

Tables 3 and 4 list the final 2026 and 2027 area apportionments and seasonal allowances of pollock in the Western GOA and Central GOA. The amounts of pollock for processing by inshore and offshore components are not shown. Section 679.20(a)(6)(i) requires the allocation of 100 percent of the pollock TAC in all GOA regulatory areas and all seasonal allowances to vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component after subtraction of pollock 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 (ICAs) of pollock are unknown and will be determined during the fishing year during the course of fishing activities by the offshore component.

Table 3 -- Final 2026 Distribution of Pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA; Area Apportionments; and Seasonal Allowances of Annual TAC [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Season ¹	Shumagin (610)	Chirikof (620)	Kodiak (630)	Total ²
A season	4,109	46,510	12,314	62,933
B season	23,344	13,967	25,622	62,933
Annual total	27,453	60,477	37,936	125,866

Note: Area apportionments and seasonal allowances may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2026 harvest specifications for pollock are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

¹ As established by § 679.23(d)(2), the A and B season allowances are available from January 20 through May 31 and September 1 through 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 2027 Distribution of Pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA; Area Apportionments; and Seasonal Allowances of Annual TAC [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Season ¹	Shumagin (610)	Chirikof (620)	Kodiak (630)	Total ²
A season	4,109	46,510	12,314	62,933
B season	23,344	13,967	25,622	62,933
Annual total	27,453	60,477	37,936	125,866

Note: Area apportionments and seasonal allowances may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2027 harvest specifications for pollock are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

² As established by § 679.23(d)(2), the A and B season allowances are available from January 20 through May 31 and September 1 through November 1, respectively. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown in this table.

³ 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

Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(12)(i), NMFS seasonally allocates the 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs in the Western GOA and Central GOA among gear and operational sectors. In the Western GOA and Central GOA, a portion 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, and a portion of the annual TAC is apportioned to the B season for jig gear from June 10 through December 31, for

hook-and-line and pot gear from September 1 through December 31, and for trawl gear from September 1 through November 1 (§§ 679.20(a)(12) and 679.23(d)(3)). NMFS also allocates the Pacific cod TACs annually between the inshore (90 percent) and offshore (10 percent) components in the Eastern GOA (§ 679.20(a)(6)(ii)).

In the Central GOA, the Pacific cod TAC is first apportioned seasonally to vessels using jig gear, then to catcher vessels (CVs) less than 50 feet (15.2 meters (m)) in length overall using hook-and-line gear, CVs equal to or greater than 50 feet (15.2 m) in length overall using hook-and-line gear, catcher/processors (CPs) using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, CPs using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear (§ 679.20(a)(12)(i)(B)). In the Western GOA, the Pacific cod TAC is first apportioned seasonally to vessels using jig gear, then to CVs using hook-and-line gear, CPs using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, CPs using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear (§ 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A)). After seasonal apportionments of TACs to the jig sector (which are 60 percent to the A season and 40 percent to the B season), § 679.20(a)(12)(i) requires that NMFS seasonally apportions the remainder of the annual Pacific cod TACs in the Western GOA as 63.84 percent to the A season and 36.16 percent to the B season, and in the Central GOA as 64.16 percent to the A season and 35.84 percent to the B season.

Under § 679.20(a)(12)(ii)(A), any overage or underage of Pacific cod apportioned to a sector in the A season may be subtracted from, or added to, the subsequent B season. In addition, any portion of a sector's allocation that is determined by NMFS as likely to go unharvested by that sector may be reallocated to other sectors for harvest during the remainder of the fishing year consistent with § 679.20(a)(12)(ii)(B).

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

Western GOA and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs, depending on the annual performance of the jig sector (see table 1 in the final rule implementing amendment 83 to the FMP for a examples of harvest scenarios affecting annual jig sector allocations (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011)). Jig sector allocation increases are established for a minimum of 2 years. Jig sector allocation decreases are established for 1 year.

NMFS has evaluated the historical harvest performance of the jig sector in the Western GOA and Central GOA and is establishing the 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod apportionments to this sector based on its historical harvest performance through 2025. For 2026 and 2027 in the Western GOA, NMFS allocates the jig sector 2.5 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC for the Western GOA. The 2026 and 2027 allocations consist of a base allocation of 1.5 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod TAC and a remaining harvest performance allocation of 1 percent. The jig sector did not reach 90 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod allocation for the 2024 or 2025 fishing year and therefore the allocation decreased by 1 percent from 3.5 to 2.5 percent. For 2026 and 2027 in the Central GOA, NMFS allocates the jig sector 4 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC for the Central GOA. The 2026 and 2027 allocations consist of a base allocation of 1 percent of the Central GOA Pacific cod TAC and a performance increase of 3 percent based on harvest performance through 2025. The 2027 allocations of the annual Pacific cod TACs in the Western GOA and Central GOA to jig gear may change based on the harvest performance of the sector in 2026, which NMFS will evaluate in the 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications.

Tables 5 and 6 list the seasonal apportionments and allocations of the 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs.

Table 5 -- Final 2026 Seasonal Apportionments and Allocation of Pacific Cod TAC Amounts in the GOA; Allocations in the Western GOA and Central GOA Sectors, and the Eastern GOA Inshore and Offshore Processing Components [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Regulatory area and sector	Annual allocation (mt)	A Season sector percentages of annual non-jig TAC (%)	A Season allowances (mt)	B Season sector percentages of annual non-jig TAC (%)	B Season allowances (mt)
Western GOA					
Jig (2.5% of TAC)	167	n/a	100	n/a	67
Hook-and-line CV	91	0.7	46	0.7	46
Hook-and-line CP	1,292	10.9	711	8.9	581
Trawl CV	2,506	31.54	2,058	6.86	448
Trawl CP	157	0.9	59	1.5	98
Pot CV and Pot CP	2,480	19.8	1,292	18.2	1,188
Total	6,693	63.84	4,266	36.16	2,427
Central GOA					
Jig (4% of TAC)	862	n/a	517	n/a	345
Hook-and-line < 50 CV	3,021	9.31552	1,927	5.28678	1,094
Hook-and-line >= 50 CV	1,387	5.60935	1,160	1.09726	227
Hook-and-line CP	1,056	4.10684	850	0.99751	206
Trawl CV non Rockfish Program ¹	7,782	25.29364	5,233	16.29047	2,549
Trawl CV Rockfish Program ¹	821	n/a	n/a	n/a	821
Trawl CP	868	2.00334	414	2.19451	454
Pot CV and Pot CP	5,752	17.82972	3,688	9.97506	2,064
Total	21,549	64.1584	13,790	35.84	7,759
Eastern GOA					
		Inshore (90% of Annual TAC)		Offshore (10% of Annual TAC)	
Total	1,811		1,630		181

Note: The 2026 harvest specifications for Pacific cod are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

¹ Trawl CVs participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives receive 3.81 percent, or 821 mt, of the annual Central GOA Pacific cod TAC (see table 28c to 50 CFR part 679). This apportionment is deducted from the Trawl CV B season allowance (see table 12 of this rule) and is available from April 1 to December 31.

Table 6 -- Final 2027 Seasonal Apportionments and Allocation of Pacific Cod TAC Amounts in the GOA; Allocations in the Western GOA and Central GOA Sectors, and the Eastern GOA Inshore and Offshore Processing Components [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Regulatory area and sector	Annual allocation (mt)	A Season sector percentages of annual non-jig TAC (%)	A Season allowances (mt)	B Season sector percentages of annual non-jig TAC (%)	B Season allowances (mt)
Western GOA					

Jig (2.5% of TAC)	130	n/a	78	n/a	52
Hook-and-line CV	71	0.7	35	0.7	35
Hook-and-line CP	1,002	10.9	552	8.9	451
Trawl CV	1,944	31.54	1,597	6.86	347
Trawl CP	121	0.9	46	1.50	76
Pot CV and Pot CP	1,924	19.8	1,002	18.2	921
Total	5,192	63.84	3,310	36.16	1,882
Central GOA					
Jig (4% of TAC)	669	n/a	401	n/a	267
Hook-and-line < 50 CV	2,343	9.31552	1,495	5.28678	848
Hook-and-line >= 50 CV	1,076	5.60935	900	1.09726	176
Hook-and-line CP	819	4.10684	659	0.99751	160
Trawl CV non Rockfish Program ¹	5,853	25.29364	4,059	16.29047	1,793
Trawl CV Rockfish Program ¹	637	n/a	n/a	n/a	637
Trawl CP	674	2.00334	322	2.19451	352
Pot CV and Pot CP	4,462	17.82972	2,861	9.97506	1,601
Total	16,717	64.1584	10,698	35.84	6,019
Eastern GOA					
		Inshore (90% of Annual TAC)	Offshore (10% of Annual TAC)		
Total	1,450		1,304		145

Note: The 2027 harvest specifications for Pacific cod are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

¹ Trawl CVs participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives receive 3.81 percent, or 637 mt, of the annual Central GOA Pacific cod TAC (see table 28c to 50 CFR part 679). This apportionment is deducted from the Trawl CV B season allowance (see table 13 of this rule) and is available from April 1 to December 31.

Allocations of the Sablefish TAC Amounts to Vessels Using Fixed and Trawl Gear

Section 679.20(a)(4)(i) and (ii) require allocations of sablefish TACs for each of the regulatory areas to fixed and trawl gear. In the Western GOA and Central GOA, 80 percent of each TAC is allocated to fixed gear, and 20 percent of each TAC is allocated to trawl gear. In the Eastern GOA, 95 percent of the TAC is allocated to fixed gear, and 5 percent is allocated to trawl gear. The trawl gear allocation in the Eastern GOA may be used only to support incidental catch of sablefish using trawl gear while engaged in directed fishing for other target species (§ 679.20(a)(4)(i)).

In recognition of the prohibition against trawl gear in the SEO District of the Eastern GOA, the Council recommended, and NMFS approves, specifying for incidental catch the allocation of 5 percent of the combined Eastern GOA sablefish TAC to trawl gear in the WYK District of the Eastern GOA. The remainder of the WYK District sablefish TAC is allocated to vessels using fixed gear. NMFS allocates 100 percent of the sablefish TAC in the SEO District to vessels using fixed gear. This results in 2026 allocations of 412 mt to trawl gear and 2,240 mt to fixed gear in the WYK District and a 2026 allocation of 5,589 mt to fixed gear in the SEO District. This also results in a 2027 allocation of 412 mt to trawl gear in the WYK District. Table 7 lists the allocations of the 2026 sablefish TACs to fixed and trawl gear. Table 8 lists the allocations of the 2027 sablefish TACs to trawl gear.

The Council recommended and NMFS agrees that only trawl sablefish TAC be established biennially and that fixed gear sablefish TAC be established for 1 year. The trawl sablefish TAC is established for 2026 and 2027 so that retention of incidental catch of sablefish by trawl gear can commence in January in the second year of the groundfish harvest specifications. Both the 2026 and 2027 trawl allocations are specified in these final harvest specifications in tables 7 and 8, respectively.

The fixed gear sablefish TAC is established annually to ensure that this Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery is conducted concurrently with the halibut IFQ fishery. Since the final harvest specifications are expected to be published before the IFQ season begins in March, NMFS specifies the fixed gear sablefish TAC annually to ensure that the sablefish IFQ fishery is conducted concurrently with the halibut IFQ fishery. Concurrent sablefish and halibut IFQ fisheries reduce the potential for discards of halibut and sablefish in those fisheries. Accordingly, table 7 lists the 2026 fixed gear allocations, and the 2027 fixed gear allocations will be specified in the 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications.

Table 7 -- Final 2026 Sablefish TAC Amounts in the GOA and Allocations to Fixed and Trawl Gear [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Area/district	TAC	Fixed gear allocation	Trawl allocation
Western	4,687	3,750	937
Central ¹	9,622	7,698	1,924
West Yakutat ²	2,652	2,240	412
Southeast Outside	5,589	5,589	0
Total	22,550	19,277	3,273

Note: The 2026 sablefish allocations to fixed and trawl gear are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

¹ The trawl allocation of sablefish in the Central GOA is further apportioned to the Rockfish Program cooperatives (990 mt). See table 28c to 50 CFR part 679 and table 12 of this rule. This results in 934 mt being available for the non-Rockfish Program trawl fisheries.

² The trawl allocation is based on allocating 5 percent of the combined Eastern GOA (WYK and SEO Districts) sablefish TAC as incidental catch to trawl gear in the WYK District.

Table 8 -- Final 2027 Sablefish TAC Amounts in the GOA and Allocations to Trawl Gear [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Area/district	TAC	Fixed gear allocation ¹	Trawl allocation
Western	4,687	n/a	937
Central ²	9,622	n/a	1,924
West Yakutat ³	2,652	n/a	412
Southeast Outside	5,589	n/a	0
Total	22,550	n/a	3,273

Note: The 2027 sablefish allocations to fixed and trawl gear are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

¹ The Council recommended and NMFS agrees that the 2027 harvest specifications for the fixed gear sablefish IFQ fisheries not be specified in the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications. The 2027 fixed gear allocations will be specified in the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications.

² The trawl allocation of sablefish in the Central GOA is further apportioned to the Rockfish Program cooperatives (990 mt). See table 28c to 50 CFR part 679 and table 13 of this rule. This results in 934 mt being available for the non-Rockfish Program trawl fisheries.

³ The trawl allocation is based on allocating 5 percent of the combined Eastern GOA (WYK and SEO Districts) sablefish TAC as incidental catch to trawl gear in the WYK District.

Allocations, Apportionments, and Sideboard Limits for the Rockfish Program

These final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications for the GOA include the fishery cooperative allocations and sideboard limitations established by the Rockfish Program. Rockfish Program participants are primarily trawl CVs and trawl CPs, with limited participation by vessels using longline gear. The Rockfish Program assigns quota share and cooperative quota to participants for primary species (*i.e.*, Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish) and secondary species (*i.e.*, Pacific cod, rougheye and blackspotted rockfish, sablefish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish), allows a participant holding a limited license privilege (LLP) license with rockfish quota share to form a rockfish cooperative with other persons, and allows holders of CP 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. Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear.

Under the Rockfish Program, rockfish primary species in the Central GOA are allocated to participants after deducting for incidental catch needs in other directed groundfish fisheries (§ 679.81(a)(2)). Participants in the Rockfish Program also receive a portion of the Central GOA TAC of specific secondary species. In addition to groundfish species, the Rockfish Program assigns a portion of the 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) and table 28d to 50 CFR part 679). The Rockfish Program also establishes sideboard limits to restrict the ability of harvesters operating under the Rockfish Program to increase their participation in other, non-Rockfish Program fisheries. These restrictions and halibut PSC limits are discussed in the Rockfish Program Groundfish and Halibut PSC Sideboard Limitations section of this rule.

Section 679.81(a)(2)(ii) and table 28e to 50 CFR part 679 require allocations of 5 mt of Pacific ocean perch, 5 mt of northern rockfish, and 50 mt of dusky rockfish to the rockfish entry-level longline fishery in 2026 and 2027. The allocations for the entry-level longline fishery may increase incrementally each year if the catch in the previous year exceeds 90 percent of the allocation of a species. The incremental increase in the allocation would continue each year until it reaches the maximum percentage of the TAC assigned to the Rockfish Program for that species. In 2025, the catch of Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish did not attain the 90 percent threshold, and the final allocations to the entry-level longline fishery therefore remain the same as the 2025 allocations. The remainder of the TACs for the rockfish primary species are allocated to the CV and CP cooperatives (§ 679.81(a)(2)(iii)). Table 9 lists the allocations

of the 2026 and 2027 TACs for each rockfish primary species to the entry-level longline fishery, the potential incremental increases for future years, and the maximum percentage of the TACs assigned to the Rockfish Program that may be allocated to the rockfish entry-level longline fishery.

Table 9 -- Final 2026 and 2027 Allocations of Rockfish Primary Species to the Entry-Level Longline Fishery in the Central GOA

Rockfish primary species	Final allocations (mt)	Incremental increase in 2027 if > 90% of 2026 allocation is harvested (mt)	Up to maximum percent of TAC (%)
Pacific ocean perch	5	5	1
Northern rockfish	5	5	2
Dusky rockfish	50	20	5

Note: The 2026 entry-level longline fishery allocations of rockfish primary species are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026. The 2027 entry-level longline fishery allocations of rockfish primary species are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Section 679.81 requires allocations of rockfish primary species among various sectors of the Rockfish Program. Tables 10 and 11 list the final 2026 and 2027 allocations of rockfish primary species in the Central GOA to the entry-level longline fishery, and rockfish CV and CP cooperatives in the Rockfish Program. NMFS also is setting aside ICAs for other directed fisheries in the Central GOA of 2,800 mt of Pacific ocean perch, 300 mt of northern rockfish, and 250 mt of dusky rockfish. These amounts are based on recent average incidental catches of these species in the Central GOA by other groundfish fisheries.

Allocations among vessels belonging to CV or CP cooperatives are not included in these final harvest specifications. Rockfish Program applications for CV cooperatives and CP cooperatives are not due to NMFS until March 1 of each calendar year; therefore, NMFS cannot calculate 2026 and 2027 cooperative allocations in conjunction with these final harvest specifications (§ 679.81(f)). After receiving the Rockfish Program applications, NMFS will calculate the 2026 allocations for CV and CP cooperatives, as

set forth in § 679.81(b), (c), and (e). NMFS will announce the 2026 cooperative allocations after March 1 in the **Federal Register**.

Table 10 -- Final 2026 Allocations of Rockfish Primary Species in the Central GOA to the Entry-Level Longline Fishery and Rockfish Cooperatives in the Rockfish Program [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

RP Species	Central GOA annual TAC	Incidental catch allowance (ICA)	TAC minus ICA	Initial allocation to entry level longline fishery ¹	Allocation to Rockfish Program participants ²
Pacific ocean perch	27,156	2,800	24,356	5	24,351
Northern rockfish	3,549	300	3,249	5	3,244
Dusky rockfish	5,527	250	5,277	50	5,227

Note: The 2026 allocations of rockfish primary species in the Central GOA are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

¹ Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear (50 CFR 679.2).

² Rockfish cooperatives include vessels in CV and CP cooperatives (50 CFR 679.81).

Table 11 -- Final 2027 Allocations of Rockfish Primary Species in the Central GOA to the Entry-Level Longline Fishery and Rockfish Cooperatives in the Rockfish Program [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

RP Species	Central GOA annual TAC	ICA	TAC minus ICA	Initial allocation to entry level longline fishery ¹	Allocation to Rockfish Program participants ²
Pacific ocean perch	27,156	2,800	24,356	5	24,351
Northern rockfish	3,549	300	3,249	5	3,244
Dusky rockfish	5,527	250	5,277	50	5,227

Note: The 2027 allocations of rockfish primary species in the Central GOA are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

¹ Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear (50 CFR 679.2).

² Rockfish cooperatives include vessels in CV and CP cooperatives (50 CFR 679.81).

Section 679.81(c) and table 28c to 50 CFR part 679 require allocations of rockfish secondary species to CV and CP cooperatives in the Central GOA. CV cooperatives receive allocations of Pacific cod, sablefish from the trawl gear allocation, and thornyhead rockfish. CP cooperatives receive allocations of sablefish from the trawl gear allocation, roughey and blackspotted rockfish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish. Tables 12 and 13 list the allocations of the 2026 and 2027 TACs of rockfish secondary species in the Central GOA to CV and CP cooperatives.

Table 12 -- Final 2026 Allocations of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P Cooperatives [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Rockfish secondary species	Central GOA Annual TAC	CV Cooperatives Percentage of TAC	CV Cooperatives Apportionment (mt)	CP Cooperatives Percentage of TAC	CP Cooperatives Apportionment (mt)
Pacific Cod	21,549	3.81	821	n/a	n/a
Sablefish	9,622	6.78	652	3.51	338
Shortraker rockfish	189	n/a	n/a	40	76
Rougheye/Blackspotted rockfish	366	n/a	n/a	58.87	215
Thornyhead rockfish	590	7.84	46	26.5	156

Note: The 2026 allocations of rockfish secondary species in the Central GOA are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

Table 13 -- Final 2027 Allocations of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P Cooperatives [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Rockfish secondary species	Central GOA Annual TAC	CV Cooperatives Percentage of TAC	CV Cooperatives Apportionment (mt)	CP Cooperatives Percentage of TAC	CP Cooperatives Apportionment (mt)
Pacific Cod	16,717	3.81	637	n/a	n/a
Sablefish	9,622	6.78	652	3.51	338
Shortraker rockfish	189	n/a	n/a	40	76
Rougheye/Blackspotted rockfish	366	n/a	n/a	58.87	215
Thornyhead rockfish	590	7.84	46	26.5	156

Note: The 2027 allocations of rockfish secondary species in the Central GOA are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Halibut PSC Limits

Section 679.21(d) establishes annual halibut PSC limit apportionments of 1,705 mt for trawl gear, 256 mt for hook-and-line gear, and 9 mt for the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery in the SEO District. It also authorizes the establishment of a halibut PSC limit apportionment for pot gear.

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 (§ 679.21(d)(2)(i)(A)). The separate halibut PSC limit for the DSR fishery is intended to prevent that fishery from being impacted from the halibut PSC incurred by other GOA fisheries. 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 there is less overlap in the distribution of DSR and halibut; and (3) the directed commercial DSR fishery has a low DSR TAC. The State sets the commercial GHL for the DSR fishery after deducting: (1) estimates of DSR incidental catch in all fisheries (including halibut and subsistence); and (2) the allocation to the DSR sport fish fishery. The directed commercial DSR fishery has been closed since 2020 due to concerns about declining DSR biomass.

NMFS, after consultation with the Council, exempts pot gear, jig gear, and the sablefish IFQ fixed gear fishery categories from the non-trawl halibut PSC limit for 2026 and 2027. NMFS, in alignment with recommendations from the Council, is establishing these exemptions because: (1) pot gear fisheries have low annual halibut bycatch mortality; (2) NMFS estimates negligible halibut mortality for 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; (3) IFQ program regulations prohibit discard of legal sized halibut if any halibut IFQ permit holder on board a CV holds unused halibut IFQ for that vessel category and the IFQ regulatory area in which the vessel is operating (§ 679.7(f)(11)); and (4) some sablefish IFQ permit holders hold halibut IFQ permits and are therefore required to retain the legal sized halibut they catch while fishing sablefish IFQ.

The best information available on estimated halibut bycatch consists of data collected by fisheries observers during 2025. The estimated halibut bycatch mortality through December 31, 2025, is 265 mt for trawl gear and 80 mt for hook-and-line gear for a total halibut mortality of 345 mt. The estimated halibut bycatch 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.

Sections 679.21(d)(4)(i) and (ii) authorize NMFS to seasonally apportion the halibut PSC limits after consultation with the Council. The FMP and regulations require that NMFS and the Council 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 2024 SAFE report, NMFS catch data, State catch data, International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) stock assessment and mortality data, and public testimony when apportioning the halibut PSC limits in table 14. NMFS concurs with the Council’s recommendations for the final 2026 and 2027 seasonal apportionments of halibut PSC limits pursuant to § 679.21(d)(1) and (4).

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

Table 14 -- Final 2026 and 2027 Pacific Halibut PSC Limits, Allowances, and Apportionments [Values are in mt]

Gear	Season	Percent	Amount
Trawl	January 20 - April 1	30.50	520
	April 1 - July 1	20	341
	July 1 - August 1	27	460
	August 1 - October 1	7.50	128
	October 1 - December 31	15	256
	Total		1,705
Hook-and-line (other than DSR) ¹	January 1 - June 10	86	219
	June 10 - September 1	2	5
	September 1 - December 31	12	31
	Total		255
Hook-and-line (DSR)	January 1 - December 31	100	9

Note: The 2026 Pacific halibut PSC limits, allowances, and apportionments are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026. The 2027 Pacific halibut

PSC limits, allowances, and apportionments are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

¹ The Pacific halibut PSC limit for hook-and-line gear is allocated to the DSR fishery in the SEO District and to hook-and-line fisheries other than the DSR fishery. NMFS, after consultation with the Council, exempts the sablefish IFQ fixed gear fishery, and the pot and jig gear groundfish fisheries, from halibut PSC limits.

Section 679.21(d)(3)(ii) authorizes further apportionment of the trawl halibut PSC limit to trawl fishery categories listed in § 679.21(d)(3)(iii). 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, and "other species" (*i.e.*, sharks and octopuses) (§ 679.21(d)(3)(iii)).

NMFS will combine available trawl halibut PSC limit apportionments during the second season deep-water and shallow-water species fishery categories for use in either fishery category from May 15 through June 30 (§ 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(D)). This is intended to maintain groundfish harvest while minimizing halibut bycatch by these sectors to the extent practicable. This provides the deep-water and shallow-water trawl fisheries additional flexibility and the incentive to participate in fisheries at times of the year that may have lower halibut PSC rates relative to other times of the year. Table 15 lists the final apportionments of trawl halibut PSC limits between the trawl gear deep-water and 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 CP 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 CP sector. These amounts are allocated from the trawl deep-water fishery category's halibut PSC third seasonal apportionment. After the combined

CV and CP halibut PSC limit of 191 mt assigned to the Rockfish Program, 149 mt remains for the trawl deep-water fishery category's halibut PSC third seasonal apportionment.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(B) limits the amount of the halibut PSC limit assigned to Rockfish Program participants that could be re-apportioned to the last seasonal apportionment for the general GOA trawl fisheries during the current fishing year to no more than 55 percent of the unused annual halibut PSC limit assigned to Rockfish Program participants. The remainder of the unused Rockfish Program halibut PSC limit is unavailable for use by any person for the remainder of the fishing year (§ 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(C)).

Table 15 -- Final 2026 and 2027 Apportionment of Pacific Halibut PSC Limits Between the Trawl Gear Deep-Water Species Fishery and the Shallow-Water Species Fishery Categories [Values are in mt]

Season	Shallow-water	Deep-water ¹	Total
January 20 - April 1	385	135	520
April 1 - July 1	85	256	341
July 1 - August 1	120	340	460
August 1 - October 1	53	75	128
October 1 - December 31 ²	n/a	n/a	256
Total	n/a	n/a	1,705

Note: The 2026 apportionments of Pacific halibut PSC limits are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026. The 2027 apportionments of Pacific halibut PSC limits are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

¹ Vessels participating in cooperatives in the Central GOA Rockfish Program will receive 191 mt of the third season (July 1 through August 1) deep-water species fishery category 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)(i)(B) requires that the halibut PSC limit apportionment to vessels using hook-and-line gear that are not part of the DSR fishery (*i.e.*, the other hook-and-line fishery) must be apportioned between CVs and CPs in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) in conjunction with these harvest specifications. CVs and CPs are apportioned part of the GOA halibut PSC limit in proportion to the total Western and Central GOA Pacific cod allocations. 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 CP sectors were included in the proposed rule to implement amendment 83 to the FMP (76 FR 44700, July 26, 2011) and are not repeated here.

In this final rule, NMFS apportions halibut PSC limits of 163 mt and 92 mt to the hook-and-line CV and hook-and-line CP sectors, respectively. Table 16 lists the final apportionments of halibut PSC limits between the hook-and-line CV and the hook-and-line CP sectors of the other hook-and-line fishery.

No later than November 1 of each year, NMFS will calculate the projected unused amount of the halibut PSC limit for the CV or CP hook-and-line sectors of the other hook-and-line fishery for the remainder of the year. The projected unused amount of halibut PSC limit is made available to the other 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 16 -- Final 2026 and 2027 Apportionments of the “Other Hook-and-Line Fishery” Annual Halibut PSC Limit Between the Hook-and-Line Gear CV and C/P Sectors [Values are in mt]

Sector	Other than DSR allowance	Sector Annual Amount	Season	Seasonal Percentage	Seasonal Amount
CV	255	163	January 1 - June 10	86	140
			June 10 - September 1	2	3
			September 1 - December 31	12	20
C/P		92	January 1 - June 10	86	79
			June 10 - September 1	2	2
			September 1 - December 31	12	11

Note: The 2026 apportionments of Pacific halibut PSC limits are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026. The 2027 apportionments of Pacific halibut PSC limits are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Estimates of Halibut Biomass and Stock Condition

The IPHC annually assesses the abundance and potential yield of the Pacific halibut stock 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 2025 Pacific halibut stock assessment (December 2025), available on the IPHC website at: <https://www.iphc.int>. The IPHC considered the 2025 Pacific halibut stock assessment at its January 2026 annual meeting when it set the 2026 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, halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs), and estimates of groundfish catch to project when a fishery's halibut bycatch mortality allowance or seasonal apportionment is reached. Halibut bycatch rates are based on observed estimates of halibut bycatch in the groundfish fishery. DMRs are estimates of the proportion of halibut that do not survive after being returned to the sea. The cumulative halibut mortality that accrues to a particular halibut PSC limit is the product of a DMR multiplied by the estimated halibut PSC. DMRs are estimated using the best scientific information available in conjunction with the annual GOA stock assessment process.

The DMRs are calculated annually based on the most recent methodology developed by a halibut working group made up of IPHC, Council, and NMFS staff. The DMR methodology and findings are included as an appendix to the GOA groundfish SAFE report. The DMRs calculated using the DMR methodology are reviewed by the Plan Team in September and the SSC in October. The Plan Team and SSC reviewed the 2026 and 2027 DMRs in September 2025 and October 2025, respectively, and that review is available at:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=fd11e1a-cb30-4bbb-8b43-90bf787c9800.pdf&fileName=Halibut%20DMR%20Working%20Group%20recommendations%20for%202026-2027.pdf>.

The halibut working group continues to consider improvements to the methodology used to calculate halibut mortality, including potential changes to the reference period (the period of data used for calculating the DMRs). DMRs are calculated using either 2- or 4-year averages, depending on data available. A 2-year average is used because it is an appropriate timeframe to capture enough samples and maintain stable estimates and PSC accounting. However, in 2023, the working group completed a 5-year review of rates and intra-annual variance of these rates and began specifying 4-year averages for the Rockfish Program non-pelagic trawl CV, hook-and-line CV, and pot operational groups. All other operational groups use a 2-year average to maintain rates that best capture current fishing practices. This methodology ensures that NMFS is using DMRs that more accurately reflect halibut mortality, which will inform the different sectors of their estimated halibut mortality and allow specific sectors to respond with methods that could reduce mortality and, eventually, the DMR for that sector.

At the October 2025 meeting, the SSC, AP, and Council concurred with the continued use of the DMR estimation methodology to calculate DMRs for 2026 and 2027. NMFS adopts the 2026 and 2027 DMRs, which use either 2- or 4-year averages. The final 2026 and 2027 DMRs in this rule are unchanged from the DMRs in the proposed 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications (90 FR 58185, December 16, 2025).

Table 17 lists these final 2026 and 2027 DMRs.

Table 17 -- Final 2026 and 2027 Halibut Discard Mortality Rates for Vessels Fishing in the GOA [Mortality rates are halibut assumed to be dead]

Gear	Sector	Groundfish fishery	Halibut discard mortality rate
Pelagic trawl	CV	All	1
Pelagic trawl	C/P	All	1
Non-pelagic trawl	CV	Rockfish Program	0.53
Non-pelagic trawl	CV	All others	0.62
Non-pelagic trawl	Mothership and C/P	All	0.79
Hook-and-line	C/P	All	0.12
Hook-and-line	CV	All	0.15
Pot	CV and C/P	All	0.29

Note: The halibut DMRs are effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Chinook Salmon PSC Limits

Section 679.21(h)(2) establishes separate Chinook salmon PSC limits in the Western GOA and Central GOA in the trawl pollock directed fishery. These limits require that NMFS close directed fishing for pollock in the Western GOA and Central GOA if the applicable Chinook salmon PSC limit is reached (§ 679.21(h)(8)). The annual Chinook salmon PSC limits in the trawl pollock directed fishery of 6,684 Chinook salmon in the Western GOA and 18,316 Chinook salmon in the Central GOA are set in § 679.21(h)(2)(i) and (ii).

Section 679.21(h)(3) and (4) establishes an initial annual PSC limit of 7,500 Chinook salmon for the non-pollock groundfish trawl fisheries in the Western GOA and Central GOA. This limit is apportioned among the three sectors that conduct directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock: (1) 3,600 Chinook salmon to trawl CPs; (2) 1,200 Chinook salmon to trawl CVs participating in the Rockfish Program; and (3) 2,700 Chinook salmon to trawl CVs not participating in the Rockfish Program (§ 679.21(h)(4)). NMFS will monitor the Chinook salmon PSC in the non-pollock GOA groundfish trawl fisheries and close an applicable sector if it reaches its Chinook salmon PSC limit (§ 679.21(h)(8)).

The Chinook salmon PSC limit for two sectors, trawl CPs and trawl CVs not participating in the 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 during a calendar year. If either or both of these two sectors limit its use of Chinook salmon PSC to a certain threshold amount through the end of the calendar year (*i.e.*, 3,120 for trawl CPs and 2,340 for non-Rockfish Program trawl CVs), that sector will receive an increase to its Chinook salmon PSC limit for the following

calendar year (4,080 for trawl CPs and 3,060 for non-Rockfish Program trawl CVs) (§ 679.21(h)(4)). In 2025, the trawl CP sector did not exceed 3,120 Chinook salmon PSC; therefore, the 2026 trawl CP sector Chinook salmon PSC limit will be 4,080 Chinook salmon. In 2025, the non-Rockfish Program trawl CV sector did not exceed 2,340 Chinook salmon PSC; therefore, the 2026 non-Rockfish Program trawl CV sector Chinook salmon PSC limit will be 3,060 Chinook salmon. NMFS will specify the 2027 PSC limits for the trawl CP and non-Rockfish Program trawl CV sectors based on their performance and their ability to minimize their use of their respective Chinook salmon PSC limits during the 2026 calendar year (§ 679.21(h)(4)).

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

Section 679.64 establishes groundfish harvesting sideboard limitations on AFA CPs 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 as compared to those fishermen and processors who receive exclusive harvesting and processing privileges under the AFA. In addition, § 679.7(k)(1)(ii) prohibits listed AFA CPs and CVs designated on a listed AFA CP permit from harvesting any species of groundfish in the GOA. Section 679.7(k)(1)(iv) prohibits listed AFA CVs and CPs designated on a listed AFA CV permit 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 feet (38.1 m) length overall, have annual landings of pollock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands of less than 5,100 mt, and have made at least 40 landings of GOA groundfish from 1995 through 1997 are exempt from GOA CV groundfish 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)(iv) establishes the CV groundfish sideboard limits in the GOA based on the aggregate retained catch by non-exempt AFA

CVs of each sideboard species from 2009 through 2019; divided by the TAC for that species available to CVs from 2009 through 2019; multiplied by the TAC available to CVs in the year or season in which the harvest limit will be in effect. Table 56 to 50 CFR part 679 lists the GOA groundfish species and species groups for which directed fishing for sideboard limits by non-exempt AFA CVs is prohibited (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iv)(D)). Sideboard limits that are not subject to these directed fishing prohibitions continue to be calculated and included in the GOA annual harvest specifications.

Tables 18 and 19 list the final 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 18 and 19.

Table 18 -- Final 2026 GOA Non-Exempt American Fisheries Act CV Groundfish Sideboard Limits [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Species	Seasonal apportionments	Area	Ratio of 2009-2019 non-exempt AFA CV retained catch to 2009-2019 TAC	Final 2026 TACs	Final 2026 non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limit
Pollock	A Season: January 20-May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.057	4,109	234
		Chirikof (620)	0.064	46,510	2,977
		Kodiak (630)	0.091	12,314	1,121
	B Season: September 1-November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.057	23,344	1,331
		Chirikof (620)	0.064	13,967	894
		Kodiak (630)	0.091	25,622	2,332
Annual	WYK (640)	0.026	3,883	101	
Pacific cod	A Season: January 20-June 10	W	0.009	4,266	38
		C	0.011	13,790	152
	B Season: September 1-November 1	W	0.009	2,427	22
		C	0.011	7,759	85
Shallow-water flatfish	Annual	C	0.011	28,455	313
Rex sole		C	0.014	13,582	190
Arrowtooth flounder		C	0.011	68,511	754
Flathead sole		C	0.007	22,083	155

Note: The 2026 GOA non-exempt AFA CV groundfish sideboard limits are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

Table 19 -- Final 2027 GOA Non-Exempt American Fisheries Act CV Groundfish Sideboard Limits [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Species	Seasonal apportionments	Area	Ratio of 2009-2019 non-exempt AFA CV retained catch to 2009-2019 TAC	Final 2027 TACs	Final 2027 non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limit
Pollock	A Season: January 20-May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.057	4,109	234
		Chirikof (620)	0.064	46,510	2,977
		Kodiak (630)	0.091	12,314	1,121
	B Season: September 1-November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.057	23,344	1,331
		Chirikof (620)	0.064	13,967	894
		Kodiak (630)	0.091	25,622	2,332
Annual	WYK (640)	0.026	3,883	101	
Pacific cod	A Season: January 20-June 10	W	0.009	3,310	30
		C	0.011	10,698	118
	B Season: September 1-November 1	W	0.009	1,882	17
		C	0.011	6,019	66
Shallow-water flatfish	Annual	C	0.011	28,455	313
Rex sole		C	0.014	13,582	190
Arrowtooth flounder		C	0.011	68,511	754
Flathead sole		C	0.007	22,083	155

Note: The 2027 GOA non-exempt AFA CV groundfish sideboard limits are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Non-Exempt AFA CV Halibut PSC Sideboard Limits

Pursuant to § 679.64(b)(4)(ii), the non-exempt AFA CVs and the associated LLP licenses PSC limit for halibut in the GOA will be an annual amount based on a static ratio of 0.072, which was derived from the aggregate retained groundfish catch by non-exempt AFA CVs in each PSC target category from 2009 through 2019. Table 20 lists the 2026 and 2027 non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC sideboard limits for vessels using trawl gear in the GOA.

Table 20 -- Final 2026 and 2027 Non-Exempt AFA CV Halibut PSC Sideboard Limits for Vessels Using Trawl Gear in the GOA

Ratio (percent)	Annual trawl gear halibut PSC limit (mt)	Annual non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC limit (mt)
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0.072	1,705	123
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Note: The 2026 non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC sideboard limit is effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026. The 2027 non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC sideboard limit is effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Non-AFA Crab Vessel Groundfish Sideboard Limitations

Section 680.22 establishes groundfish sideboard 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 (CR) 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 the CR Program, including amendments 18 and 19 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (Crab FMP) (70 FR 10174, March 2, 2005), amendment 34 to the Crab FMP (76 FR 35772, June 20, 2011), amendment 83 to the GOA FMP (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011), and amendment 45 to the Crab FMP (80 FR 28539, May 19, 2015). In addition, through rulemaking (84 FR 2723, February 8, 2019), non-AFA crab vessels are prohibited from directed fishing for all groundfish species or species groups subject to sideboard limits, except for Pacific cod apportioned to CVs using pot gear in the Western GOA and Central GOA (§ 680.22(e)(1)(iii)), so NMFS does not establish groundfish sideboard limits for non-AFA crab vessels except for Pacific cod apportioned to CVs using pot gear in the Western GOA and Central GOA.

Tables 21 and 22 list the final 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 21 -- Final 2026 GOA Non-American Fisheries Act Crab Vessel Groundfish Sideboard Limits [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Species	Season	Sector	Ratio of 1996-2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996-2000 total harvest	Final 2026 TACs	Final 2026 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit
Pacific cod	A Season: January 20-June 10	Western GOA Pot CV	0.0997	4,266	425
		Central GOA Pot CV	0.0474	13,790	654
	B Season: September 1-November 1	Western GOA Pot CV	0.0997	2,427	242
		Central GOA Pot CV	0.0474	7,759	368

Note: The 2026 GOA non-AFA crab vessel groundfish sideboard limits are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

Table 22 -- Final 2027 GOA Non-American Fisheries Act Crab Vessel Groundfish Sideboard Limits [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Species	Season	Sector	Ratio of 1996-2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996-2000 total harvest	Final 2027 TACs	Final 2027 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit
Pacific cod	A Season: January 20-June 10	Western GOA Pot CV	0.0997	3,310	330
		Central GOA Pot CV	0.0474	10,698	507
	B Season: September 1-November 1	Western GOA Pot CV	0.0997	1,882	188
		Central GOA Pot CV	0.0474	6,019	285

Note: The 2027 GOA non-AFA crab vessel groundfish sideboard limits are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Rockfish Program Groundfish and Halibut PSC Sideboard Limitations

The Rockfish Program establishes three classes of sideboard provisions: (1) CV groundfish sideboard restrictions; (2) CP rockfish sideboard restrictions; and (3) CP opt-out vessel sideboard restrictions (§ 679.82(c)(1)). These sideboards are intended to limit the ability of rockfish harvesters to expand into other GOA groundfish fisheries.

CVs participating in the Rockfish Program may not participate in directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the WYK District and Western GOA from July 1 through July 31. Also, CVs participating in the Rockfish Program 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)).

CPs participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives are restricted by rockfish and halibut PSC sideboard limits. These CPs are prohibited from directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the WYK District and Western GOA from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(e)(2)). The sideboard ratio for each rockfish fishery in the WYK District is an established percentage of the TAC for CPs in the directed fishery for dusky rockfish and Pacific ocean perch (§ 679.82(e)(4)). These percentages are confidential, however, the method for determining the percentages is described in § 679.82(e)(3). Holders of CP-designated LLP licenses that opt out of participating in a Rockfish Program cooperative will be able to access that portion of each rockfish sideboard limit that is not assigned to rockfish cooperatives (§ 679.82(e)(7)).

Under the Rockfish Program, the CP sector is subject to halibut PSC sideboard limits for the trawl deep-water and shallow-water fisheries from July 1 to July 31 (§ 679.82(e)(3) and (5)). No halibut PSC sideboard limits apply to the CV sector, as CVs participating in cooperatives receive a portion of the annual halibut PSC limit. CPs that opt out of the Rockfish Program are able to access that portion of the deep-water and shallow-water fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit not assigned to CP rockfish cooperatives. The sideboard provisions for CPs that elect to opt out of participating in a Rockfish Program cooperative are described in § 679.82(c), (e), and (f). Sideboard limits are linked to the catch history of specific vessels; however, some of these vessels may choose to opt out of the Rockfish Program. After March 1, NMFS will determine which

CPs have opted-out of the Rockfish Program in 2026 and will know the ratios and amounts used to calculate opt-out sideboard ratios. NMFS will then calculate any applicable opt-out sideboards for 2026. NMFS will announce these limits after March 1 in the **Federal Register**. Table 23 lists the final Rockfish Program halibut PSC sideboard limits for the CP sector.

Table 23 -- Final 2026 and 2027 Rockfish Program Halibut PSC Sideboard Limits for the C/P Sector [Values are rounded to the nearest mt]

Sector	Shallow-water fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	Deep-water fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	Annual trawl gear halibut PSC limit (mt)	Annual shallow-water fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)	Annual deep-water fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)
C/P	0.1	2.5	1,705	2	43

Note: The 2026 Rockfish Program halibut PSC sideboard limits are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026. The 2027 Rockfish Program halibut PSC sideboard limits are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Amendment 80 Program Groundfish and Halibut 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 CP sector. The Amendment 80 Program established groundfish and halibut PSC sideboard 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 to amounts no greater than the limits listed in table 37 to 50 CFR part 679. The Amendment 80 Program vessel, 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, and is not subject to halibut PSC sideboard limits in the GOA (§ 679.92(d)).

Groundfish sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels operating in the GOA are based on their average aggregate harvests from 1998 through 2004 (72 FR 52668, September 14, 2007). Tables 24 and 25 list the final groundfish 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 24 and 25.

Table 24 -- Final 2026 GOA Groundfish Sideboard Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels [Values are rounded to nearest mt]

Species	Season	Area	Ratio of amendment 80 sector vessels 1998 - 2004 catch to TAC	Final 2026 TACs	Final 2026 amendment 80 vessel sideboard limit (mt)
Pollock	A Season: January 20-May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.003	4,109	12
	A Season: January 20-May 31	Chirikof (620)	0.002	46,510	93
	A Season: January 20-May 31	Kodiak (630)	0.002	12,314	25
	B Season: September 1- November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.003	23,344	70
	B Season: September 1- November 1	Chirikof (620)	0.002	13,967	28
	B Season: September 1- November 1	Kodiak (630)	0.002	25,622	51
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.002	3,883	8
Pacific cod	A Season: January 20-June 10	W	0.02	4,266	85
	A Season: January 20-June 10	C	0.044	13,790	607
	B Season: September 1- November 1	W	0.02	2,427	49
	B Season: September 1- November 1	C	0.044	7,759	341
	Annual	WYK	0.034	1,811	62
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.994	1,688	1,678
	Annual	WYK	0.961	1,993	1,915
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	1	1,346	1,346
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.764	199	152
	Annual	WYK	0.896	204	183

Note: The 2026 GOA groundfish sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

Table 25 -- Final 2027 GOA Groundfish Sideboard Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels [Values are rounded to nearest mt]

Species	Season	Area	Ratio of amendment 80 sector vessels 1998 - 2004 catch to TAC	Final 2027 TACs	Final 2027 amendment 80 vessel sideboard limit (mt)
Pollock	A Season: January 20-May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.003	4,109	12
	A Season: January 20-May 31	Chirikof (620)	0.002	46,510	93
	A Season: January 20-May 31	Kodiak (630)	0.002	12,314	25
	B Season: September 1-November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.003	23,344	70
	B Season: September 1-November 1	Chirikof (620)	0.002	13,967	28
	B Season: September 1-November 1	Kodiak (630)	0.002	25,622	51
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.002	3,883	8
Pacific cod	A Season: January 20-June 10	W	0.02	3,310	66
	A Season: January 20-June 10	C	0.044	10,698	471
	B Season: September 1-November 1	W	0.02	1,882	38
	B Season: September 1-November 1	C	0.044	6,019	265
	Annual	WYK	0.034	1,450	49
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.994	1,688	1,678
	Annual	WYK	0.961	1,993	1,915
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	1	1,346	1,346
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.764	199	152
	Annual	WYK	0.896	204	183

Note: The 2027 GOA groundfish sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

The halibut 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: (1) the allocation of halibut PSC cooperative quota under the Rockfish Program and (2) the exemption of the F/V “Golden Fleece” from this restriction (§ 679.92(b)(2)). Table 26 lists the final halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels. 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. Any residual amount of a seasonal Amendment 80 Program halibut PSC sideboard limit may carry forward to the next season limit (§ 679.92(b)(2)).

Table 26 -- Final 2026 and 2027 Halibut PSC Sideboard Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels in the GOA [Values are rounded to nearest mt]

Season	Season dates	Target fishery	Historic amendment 80 use of the annual halibut PSC limit catch (ratio)	Annual trawl gear halibut PSC limit (mt)	2026 and 2027 amendment 80 vessel halibut PSC limit
1	January 20 - April 1	shallow-water	0.0048	1,705	8
		deep-water	0.0115	1,705	20
2	April 1 - July 1	shallow-water	0.0189	1,705	32
		deep-water	0.1072	1,705	183
3	July 1 - August 1	shallow-water	0.0146	1,705	25
		deep-water	0.0521	1,705	89
4	August 1 - October 1	shallow-water	0.0074	1,705	13
		deep-water	0.0014	1,705	2
5	October 1 - December 31	shallow-water	0.0227	1,705	39
		deep-water	0.0371	1,705	63
Annual	Total shallow water				117
	Total deep water				357
	Grand total, all seasons and categories				474

Note: The 2026 halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels are effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026. The 2027 halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2027, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

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 (with respect to pollock and Pacific cod) (2) that an allocation or apportionment to an inshore or offshore component or sector allocation will be reached, then 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 season or year, NMFS will prohibit directed fishing for that species or species group in the specified GOA subarea, regulatory area, or district (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iii)).

The Regional Administrator has determined that the TACs for the species and species groups listed in table 27 are necessary to account for the incidental catch of these species in other anticipated groundfish fisheries for the 2026 and 2027 fishing years.

Table 27 – Final 2026 and 2027 Directed Fishing Closures in the GOA [Amounts for incidental catch in other directed fisheries are in mt]

Species	Area/sector or program/gear	ICA amounts for 2026	ICA amounts for 2027
Pollock ¹	All, ICA, offshore	0	0
	Shumagin (610), A80 sideboard, trawl	82	82
	Chirikof (620), A80 sideboard, trawl	121	121
	Kodiak (630), A80 sideboard, trawl	76	76
	WYK District (640), A80 sideboard, trawl	8	8
Sablefish	All, trawl ²	3,273	3,273
Pacific Cod	Western GOA, CV, HAL	72	72
	Western GOA, CP, trawl	125	125
	Western GOA, AFA sideboard, trawl	52	52
	Central GOA, CP, trawl ²	582	582
Pacific ocean perch	Central GOA, ICA, trawl ²	2,800	2,800
Northern rockfish	Central GOA, ICA, trawl ²	300	300
Shortraker rockfish	All ²	647	647
Dusky rockfish	Central GOA, ICA, trawl ²	250	250
Rougheye/Blackspotted rockfish	All ²	1,203	1,203
Demersal shelf rockfish	C/W/WYK	271	271
Thornyhead rockfish	All ²	1,338	1,338
Other rockfish	All	1,384	1,384
Atka mackerel	All	3,000	3,000
Big skate	All	2,835	2,835
Longnose skate	All	2,536	2,536
Other skates	All	665	665
Sharks	All	4,891	4,891
Octopuses	All	964	964

Note: The directed fishing closures are effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

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

² Closures are not applicable to participants in Central GOA Rockfish Program cooperatives while such participants are checked into the Central GOA Rockfish Program (and therefore are fishing under the authority of a rockfish cooperative quota permit) because cooperatives are prohibited from exceeding their allocations (§ 679.7(n)(6)(viii)).

Consequently, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator establishes the DFA for the species or species groups listed in table 27 as zero mt.

Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for those species and species groups, areas, gear types, and components in the GOA listed in table 27 effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 17, 2027.

Inseason closures implemented under the 2025 and 2026 GOA harvest specifications for groundfish (90 FR 12468, March 18, 2025) remain effective under

authority of these final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications and until the date specified in those closure notifications or superseded by a subsequent action. Inseason closures are posted at the following website under the Alaska filter for Management Areas:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/rules-and-announcements/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 at 50 CFR part 679. NMFS may implement other openings and closures during the 2026 and 2027 fishing years as necessary for effective conservation and management and consistent with the regulations at 50 CFR part 679.

Comments and Responses

NMFS received three letters with six unique comments during the public comment period for the proposed GOA groundfish harvest specifications (90 FR 58185, December 16, 2025). One letter was from an organization, and two letters were from individuals. NMFS's responses are below.

Comment 1: NMFS should consider how the harvest specifications affect communities, including small communities.

Response: NMFS recognizes the harvest specifications, in particular the specification of TACs, affect fishery participants and communities and the importance of the communities that depend on Alaska fisheries.

One of the purposes of the harvest strategy used to develop the harvest specifications is to support sustainable fishing communities. The harvest specifications specify TAC amounts for harvest by fishing vessels and processing by fish processors, both of which are supported by businesses located in coastal communities. Many coastal communities rely on processing plants to generate revenue and employ community

members, and reducing the amount of fish landed in these communities could have detrimental economic effects on these communities.

The TAC amounts are set each year based on consideration of the best scientific information available and public comment relevant to impacts on communities. The Economic SAFE, ESRs, and ESPs provide relevant information on the status of fishery participants and communities throughout Alaska and relevant socioeconomic indicators are presented in the ESRs and ESPs. As noted in the 2024 ESR, the majority of Alaska groundfish and crab fisheries are sustainably managed.

The harvest specifications are informed by public comment that can be provided at every step through the Council and NMFS processes. Public comment can inform the Council's and NMFS's consideration in recommending and setting TACs, respectively, such as impacts to small communities. The AP also reviews and provides TAC recommendations to the Council. The Council appoints to the AP recognized experts from the fishing industry and related fields who represent a variety of gear types, industry, and related interests as well as a spread of geographic regions of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest having major interest in the fisheries off Alaska. The AP also has a designated Alaska Native Tribal Representative seat. The purpose of the AP is to represent and provide the perspectives of fishery participants and affected communities. Through its role, the AP provides perspectives on the socioeconomic and cultural impacts of TAC and PSC amounts on fishery participants and affected communities.

Each year, NMFS also publishes the proposed specifications and invites public comment. This provides the public with another opportunity to offer NMFS information and input for consideration on the social and economic impacts of the proposed TACs for each stock or stock complex.

Ultimately, every final 2026 and 2027 TAC has been specified within the robust, precautionary framework outlined in responses to comments 2 and 4; this framework is

designed to prevent overfishing while achieving the OY for the GOA groundfish fisheries. These TACs, as specified under the harvest strategy, are within the OY range for the GOA groundfish fisheries and support sustainable fishing communities while also providing for sustainable incomes for fishery participants.

Comment 2: Setting TAC above precautionary or conservative levels will worsen bycatch impacts on ecosystems and harm local Alaska communities dependent on them.

Response: The TAC setting process accounts for ecosystem and socioeconomic information, such as impacts on communities. The TACs specified in this final rule are consistent with regulations on bycatch, implemented in consideration of ecosystem information, based on precaution that is built into the process, and reflective of socioeconomic considerations, like effects on communities. Effects on communities are also addressed in response to comment 1. The specification of bycatch (PSC) limits is addressed in response to comment 5.

The annual process for specifying TACs for groundfish in the GOA is a thorough, scientifically driven process informed by the best available information on the status of target and bycatch species and the marine ecosystem in the GOA as well as socioeconomic considerations like harvest data and impacts on fishery participants and communities. The primary sources of ecosystem information are the ESRs, which provide the Plan Team, SSC, AP, Council, scientific community, and the public, as well as NMFS, with annual information about ecosystem status and trends for the GOA. The ESRs are drafted by scientists and staff from NOAA, other Federal and State agencies, academic institutions, Tribes, and non-profits. The ESRs also provide information on the status of PSC species like salmon, halibut, and crab. The 2024 GOA ESR, for example, includes information on: (1) directed commercial catch of salmon; juvenile salmon abundance, size, and condition; (2) trends in survival of coho, sockeye, and pink salmon in Southeast Alaska; and (3) low returns of pink salmon in 2024.

Ecosystem information from the ESRs, as well as ESPs, is integrated into the stock assessments for target species in several ways. Stock assessment authors will include, if possible, relevant ecosystem-related factors into their modeling. Many models use variables that are potentially ecosystem-related, climate-impacted like size and condition of fish (*i.e.*, length and weight) and recruitment, and some models integrate specific environmental factors that have been influenced by climate variability, such as the extent of the cold pool and bottom temperature in the survey area. Some stock assessments present ecosystem considerations qualitatively through an additional ecosystem considerations section prepared for operational assessments, and all stock assessments include a risk table. The tables include four categories of considerations: (1) assessment-related; (2) population dynamics; (3) environmental/ecosystem; and (4) fishery performance. The risk tables inform the Plan Team and SSC OFL and ABC recommendations by signaling the status (*i.e.*, level of concern) of these four considerations for a stock or stock complex. This means that a reduction can occur for the maximum recommended ABC as specified by the stock assessment model or as recommended by the author. Risk tables are most informative for the specification of ABC by accounting for additional scientific information and uncertainty that is not captured in the modeling.

Some stock assessments also include an ESP, which is a framework for organizing ecosystem and socioeconomic information about an individual stock. The ESP informs environmental and ecosystem considerations, population dynamics, and fisheries performance about that stock and is also integrated into the stock assessment in the risk table. GOA groundfish stocks with ESPs include: (1) sablefish; (2) pollock; and (3) Pacific cod.

As a result, the Plan Team and SSC review a robust set of information on the status of target and bycatch species and the GOA ecosystem. This information is fully

incorporated in the groundfish harvest specifications process such that the setting of OFL and ABC for stocks and stock complexes accounts for the best scientific information available. Stock assessments that utilize this information are thoroughly reviewed by the Plan Team and the SSC through a public process.

The TAC setting process is likewise informed by this information, which is the best scientific information available on the biological condition of the stocks and socioeconomic considerations. The ESRs and ESPs provide relevant information for setting TACs, and information from the ESRs and ESPs is presented and reviewed by the Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council during the process. In the TAC setting process, the Council reviews the Plan Team and SSC reports. With this information, public comment, and TAC recommendations from the Council's AP, the Council recommends TACs to NMFS. NMFS reviews those recommendations, the Plan Team and SSC reports, the SAFE reports, and other relevant documents.

For specifying TAC, the FMP and regulations further provide that TAC may be lower than the ABC if warranted on the basis of bycatch considerations, management uncertainty, or socioeconomic considerations, or if required in order to cause the sum of the TACs to fall within the OY range (FMP section 3.2.3.4.1; § 679.20(a)(3)). In the GOA, some TACs have been adjusted based on PSC considerations. The Western GOA shallow-water flatfish, Western GOA arrowtooth flounder, and Western GOA 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.

Consistent with National Standard 1 guidelines in Federal regulations at § 600.310 and the FMP, the TAC cannot exceed ABC, and ABC cannot exceed the OFL (§ 600.310(f)(3), (f)(4), and (g)(4)). For all stocks and stock complexes in the GOA, ABCs do not exceed the OFLs, and TACs do not exceed the ABCs (and therefore ACLs). The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that conservation and management measures shall

prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the OY for each fishery (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(1)). The OFL is the catch level above which overfishing is occurring; overfishing occurs whenever a stock or stock complex is subjected to a level of fishing mortality or annual total catch that jeopardizes the capacity of a stock or stock complex to produce maximum sustainable yield on a continuing basis (FMP section 3.2.1). This rule specifies an OFL for each stock and stock complex. NMFS manages fisheries inseason by monitoring catch (retained and discarded) to ensure that TACs are not exceeded. Managing catch to stay at or below the TAC ensures that the ABC (and therefore ACL) and OFL are not exceeded. Each stock assessment also notes whether overfishing has occurred for that stock or stock complex, and none of the groundfish of the GOA are subject to overfishing.

Comment 3: It is important to manage fisheries sustainably, prevent overfishing, and set clear limits.

Response: NMFS acknowledges that we are setting harvest and PSC limits in the GOA groundfish fisheries to accomplish the goals and objectives of the GOA FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This final rule sets clear limits for the GOA groundfish fisheries through the specification of OFL, ABC, and TAC for each stock and stock complex. See the responses to comments 1 and 2 for more information.

Comment 4: The TACs should be set at the most conservative and precautionary level at the lower limit of the OY of 116,000 mt. The current process does not account for uncertainty that faces the ecosystem and fisheries.

Response: The groundfish harvest specifications process and resulting TACs incorporates available information on the status of the ecosystems, accounts for uncertainty and risk, and is precautionary, and for these reasons NMFS does not agree that TACs should be set any lower than the current sum (which is within the mid-range of the OY).

The FMP and implementing regulations direct that the sum of the TACs for the GOA “must be within the OY range specified” in regulation (§ 679.20(a)(1)(i)(B) and (a)(2)). The sum of the TACs for 2026 is 470,482 mt and for 2027 is 465,697 mt, and both sums are within the OY range specified in regulation (116,000 to 800,000 mt). This OY, which was previously recommended by the Council and approved by NMFS, is set forth in the FMP and in regulation. NMFS has therefore determined that, in any given year, setting the TACs to fall within the OY range is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and provides the greatest overall benefit to the Nation, particularly with respect to food production and recreational opportunities and taking into account the protection of marine ecosystems and relevant economic, social, or ecological factors (§ 600.310(e)(3)).

NMFS does not agree that TACs should be set any lower than the current sum (which is within the mid-range of the OY). These TACs, as explained below, account for the current status of fish stocks and the GOA ecosystem, while also accounting for current uncertainties and socioeconomic considerations across the fisheries and communities of the GOA.

The harvest specifications process is a robust process that involves significant scientific review and input and uses the best scientific information available when applying the harvest strategy to establish annual harvest specifications. Scientists from the AFSC prepare the stock assessments using sophisticated statistical analyses of fish populations. The assessments for the GOA are informed by the survey and harvest data available, including biennial surveys in the GOA. The stock assessments undergo rigorous review, during public meetings, by the scientists and resource managers on the Plan Team and SSC. The Plan Team first reviews the stock assessments and recommends OFLs and ABCs for each stock or stock complex for specified management areas. The SSC then reviews the assessments and recommends OFLs and ABCs, which provide the

foundation for the Council to recommend and NMFS to implement the TAC for each stock and stock complex. The status of fish stocks in the GOA is reviewed in each stock assessment, the status of the GOA ecosystem is compiled in ESR and other reports that are expressly considered throughout the process, and the status of fisheries and fishing communities are also compiled in several reports and presented at the various meetings and during the public comment period.

Precautions that account for uncertainties and risk are embedded throughout the harvest strategy and annual stock assessment process for specifying OFLs, ABCs, and TACs for GOA groundfish stocks. First, OFL and ABC are calculated using prescribed methods set forth in the FMP. These methods become more precautionary depending on the tier level and stock status. For example, with less reliable information, the larger the buffer (reduction) between OFL and ABC, and as stock status declines, the OFL and ABC are reduced. Calculating OFLs and ABCs using this tier system accounts for uncertainties as it is based on the level of reliable information about the stock and is adaptive based on stock status. Precaution built into the specification of OFL and ABC also influences TAC because TAC cannot exceed ABC, and ABC cannot exceed OFL. Second, risk tables are a tool prepared for Alaska groundfish stocks to specifically address uncertainty across four categories of considerations: (1) assessment-related; (2) population dynamics; (3) environmental/ecosystem; and (4) fishery performance. The risk tables inform Plan Team and SSC OFL and ABC recommendations by signaling the status (*i.e.*, level of concern) of these four considerations for each assessed stock and stock complex. This means that a reduction can occur for the maximum recommended ABC as specified by the stock assessment model or as recommended by the author. Risk tables are most informative for the specification of ABC by accounting for additional scientific information and uncertainty that is not captured in the modeling. This approach is consistent with the FMP and National Standard 1 guidelines that ABC accounts for

scientific uncertainty in the estimate of OFL and “any other scientific uncertainty” (FMP section 3.2.3.3.1; § 600.310(f)(1)(ii)). Because TAC cannot exceed ABC, reductions in ABC for scientific uncertainty based on the risk table result in additional precaution in the catch limits (*i.e.*, TACs) for groundfish of the GOA.

The specification of TACs also accounts for management uncertainty. As defined in the FMP and consistent with National Standard 1 guidelines, TAC is the annual catch target for a stock or stock complex, derived from the ABC by considering social and economic factors and management uncertainty (*i.e.*, uncertainty in the ability of managers to constrain catch so the ACL is not exceeded, and uncertainty in quantifying the true catch amount) (FMP section 3.2.1; § 600.310(f) and (g)(4)). The FMP and regulations further provide that TAC may be lower than the ABC if warranted on the basis of bycatch considerations, management uncertainty, or socioeconomic considerations (FMP section 3.2.3.4.1; § 679.20(a)(3)). TACs in the GOA have been reduced to account for other socioeconomic considerations, specifically to reduce the amount of discards, to accommodate ICAs in other fisheries, or to allow for increased harvest opportunities for some target species while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other, more fully utilized fisheries.

Any additional uncertainty in this year’s process was addressed by the SSC in December 2025 and summarized in the SSC report. At its December 2025 meeting during which the SSC recommended final 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs, the SSC recognized that due to the disruption in the completion of new assessments in 2025 there is increased uncertainty and elevated risk for all stocks. In implementing what the SSC called a “structured process” for developing its OFL and ABC recommendations in light of this increased uncertainty and risk, the SSC used as a starting point the proposed OFLs and ABCs for 2026 that were recommended by the SSC in October 2025. These are the final OFLs and ABCs for 2026 that were reviewed in the 2024 cycle and are based on the 2024

SAFE report. Under the SSC's framework, the SSC then evaluated whether any stocks should be considered for potential changes to those proposed specifications and whether individual stocks warranted consideration of additional conservation. The SSC determined that the framework established criteria for considering whether the proposed specifications, which were based on the most recent fully peer reviewed SAFE reports, remain the best available scientific advice.

The SSC's stock-specific deliberations focused on whether additional uncertainty and risk were sufficient to warrant reductions in ABC (which, as explained above, influences TAC as TAC cannot exceed ABC). SSC discussions highlighted the need to explicitly consider the increase in uncertainty as stock trends and reference points are projected forward over multiple years but noted that an approach for quantifying increased uncertainty could not be developed in the current timeframe. Ultimately, SSC used the established qualitative risk table framework for consistency across years in order to inform whether reductions in ABC were warranted on the basis of the best information available during this year's specifications process. The SSC also explained that the specifications process is based on the tier system, precautionary harvest control rules, and assessment frequencies that reflect different life history dynamics and are periodically reviewed and adjusted. In sum, the SSC recognized the potential for increased uncertainty and risk in developing the 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs. Any additional uncertainty and risk was expressly assessed by the SSC for each stock through the evaluation of the risk tables, which are an established method for assessing additional scientific information and uncertainty that are not captured in the modeling for calculating ABC. The SSC's December 2025 report is available at:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=74322a78-4de1-451c-a10f-13b11286f8b9.pdf&fileName=Draft%20SSC%20Report%20Dec%202025.pdf>

Comment 5: The PSC limits should be set at the most conservative and precautionary level for the GOA. The information used to set the PSC limits is stale and outdated.

Response: The harvest specifications set PSC limits based on pre-existing frameworks set out in the regulations. In these final harvest specifications, NMFS implements PSC limits consistent with the requirements of the regulations for setting PSC limits.

Halibut PSC limits are established in regulations at § 679.21(d) such that there is no updated information needed for fixed limits already established in regulation, with the exception discussed in the next paragraph. Modification to the halibut PSC limits set in regulations is outside of the scope of this action.

For apportioning the “other hook-and-line fishery” halibut PSC limit between CVs and CPs, NMFS has used the most recent information available, the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment. Section 679.21(d)(2)(iii) 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 CPs based on the Western GOA and Central GOA Pacific cod allocations, which vary annually based on the proportion of the Pacific cod biomass between the Western GOA, Central GOA, and Eastern GOA. The updated Pacific cod stock assessment describes this distributional calculation, which apportions ABC among GOA regulatory areas on the basis of the three most recent stock surveys. NMFS therefore implements this apportionment based on the most recent information available and consistent with the regulations for setting halibut PSC limits.

NMFS specifies the seasonal apportionments of the halibut PSC limits in the annual groundfish harvest specifications based on the following factors: (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 catches of target groundfish species; (4) expected variations in bycatch rates throughout the fishing year; (5) expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons; (6) expected start of fishing effort; and (7) economic effects of establishing seasonal halibut allocations on segments of the target groundfish industry (§ 679.21(d)(4)(ii)).

Per § 679.21(d)(1)(iii), NMFS will consider public comment on the proposed halibut PSC apportionments and after consulting with the Council, will publish in the final specifications the final halibut PSC apportionments. The Council did not recommend any modifications to the halibut PSC seasonal apportionments. There were no exceedances for any gear types or any seasonal apportionments for any halibut PSC category in 2025. In October 2025, the Council recommended and NMFS proposed halibut PSC apportionments. NMFS is implementing the final halibut PSC seasonal apportionments in this final rule as recommended by the Council in December 2025.

Chinook salmon PSC limits are established in regulations at § 679.21(h) for pollock and non-pollock trawl sectors. Sector limits for the directed pollock trawl fishery are fixed. Sector limits for the non-pollock trawl groundfish fisheries are also fixed, but the limit for two sectors 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 during the fishing year. In 2025, there were no Chinook salmon sector limits exceeded, so the limits will remain the same for 2026. Modifying any salmon PSC limit set in regulations is outside the scope of this action.

National Standard 9 directs that conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable, minimize bycatch, and, if bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize mortality of bycatch (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(9)). NMFS develops and implements FMP amendments and regulations for new bycatch reduction measures, including PSC limits, based on the recommendations made by the Council. Each of these actions establishing a

PSC limit considered and balanced all the National Standards, including the direction to minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality, including PSC, to the extent practicable.

Specifying PSC limits in the annual harvest specifications consistent with the existing PSC regulations is therefore consistent with National Standard 9. NMFS and the Council are committed to continued improvements in bycatch management; however, changes to PSC limits and bycatch management are outside the scope of this final rule to implement the 2026 and 2027 groundfish harvest specifications for the GOA.

Comment 6: The harvest specifications are in violation of the Council's peer review process, SSC guidelines, and National Standard 2 because there was no 2025 SAFE report and no recommendations from the Plan Teams. The 2024 SAFE is stale and outdated.

Response: NMFS is required to implement harvest specifications consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, implementing regulations, and the FMP. NMFS has determined the final harvest specifications are consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, including National Standard 2, implementing regulations, and the FMP, and align with other guidelines like the SSC Handbook.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that conservation and management measures be based on the best scientific information available (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(1)) and that the SSC provide scientific advice for fishery management decisions, including recommendations for ABCs, preventing overfishing, and reporting on stock status and health (16 U.S.C. 1852(g)(1)(B)). Regulations implementing the FMP require NMFS to publish proposed specifications after consultation with the Council and provide an opportunity for public comment before finalizing specifications (§ 679.20(c)).

Under the FMP, the Council develops harvest specification recommendations for NMFS's consideration based on: (1) recommendations and supporting information from the Groundfish Plan Teams and SSC; (2) information from the AP and the public; and (3)

other relevant information. The SAFE report that informs harvest specifications is reviewed by the Groundfish Plan Teams, SSC, AP, and Council. The FMP and SSC Handbook specify that SSC review constitutes the official scientific review under the Information Quality Act and that SAFE reports accepted by the SSC constitute the best scientific information available for purposes of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (FMP section 3.2.3.1.2). The SSC Handbook also indicates that the SSC recommends OFLs and ABCs after reviewing the stock assessment and the report of the Plan Team that reviewed the stock assessment. The SSC Handbook is available at:

<https://files.npfmc.org/membership/SSC/SSChandbook.pdf>

NMFS acknowledges there was a disruption in the completion of the stock assessments that were scheduled for update in 2025, and the November 2025 Plan Team meetings were canceled (since there were no updated stock assessments to review at that time). However, this disruption does not render the final harvest specifications inconsistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, implementing regulations, or the FMP.

The 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs are unchanged from specifications previously reviewed by the Plan Team and SSC, with two exceptions as explained below. The OFLs and ABCs recommended in 2025 were based on the 2024 SAFE report, which underwent full review by the Plan Team and SSC in 2024 and informed the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications. The same OFLs and ABCs were subsequently reviewed again by the Plan Team in October 2025 and by the SSC in October 2025 for the proposed specifications using the 2024 SAFE report, the same as in prior years. This year, the same OFLs and ABCs were then reviewed again by the SSC in December 2025 using the 2024 SAFE report and additional information including prior SAFE reports, GOA catch reports for 2024 and 2025, 2025 survey information (GOA bottom-trawl survey and GOA relative population number longline survey), and preliminary ESR and ESPs from October 2025.

The two exceptions to the harvest specifications without 2025 updates are Pacific cod and the deep-water flatfish stock complex. In December 2025, the Council requested that NMFS update the Pacific cod stock assessment. That assessment was updated and reviewed by the Plan Team in January 2026 and by the SSC and Council in February 2026. The SSC recommended updated OFLs and ABCs, and the Council recommended updated TACs. An abbreviated GOA ESR and an updated ESP for Pacific cod were also prepared and reviewed. For deep-water flatfish, a harvest projection scheduled for 2025 was completed and reviewed by the Plan Team in September 2025 and by the SSC in October 2025, consistent with established procedures for review of harvest projections and the SSC's role as the official scientific review body.

Even with the disruptions in 2025, this review by the Plan Team and SSC for all GOA groundfish stocks remains consistent with the FMP and aligns with the SSC Handbook. The SSC further fulfilled its statutory role by recommending ABCs and OFLs to prevent overfishing and by reviewing stock status and health. Although NMFS was unable to update all of the stock assessments scheduled for updates in 2025, the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications are based on the best scientific information available. This includes: (1) the 2024 SAFE report and its accompanying ESR; (2) the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment, ESP, and abbreviated GOA ESR; (3) the 2025 deep-water flatfish harvest projection; (4) prior SAFE reports; (5) 2024 and 2025 catch reports; (6) survey indices from 2025 AFSC surveys; (7) biomass and survey trend summaries; and (8) preliminary ESRs and ESPs where available. The information accepted by the SSC constitutes the best scientific information available for purposes of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The annual harvest specification process this year therefore relies on the best scientific information available, including peer-reviewed stock assessments by the Plan Team and the SSC (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(2); § 600.315).

The Council has recommended proposed and then final TACs. The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council meetings are open to the public both virtually and in person and provide an opportunity for public comment. The SAFE reports are available online (see **ADDRESSES**). In addition, NMFS published the proposed rule for the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications on December 16, 2025, and public comment was invited through January 5, 2026 (90 FR 58185). Development of the harvest specifications was fully transparent, with multiple opportunities for public review and comment at the Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council meetings and through the public comment period announced in the **Federal Register**.

NMFS is now implementing these final harvest specifications after consultation with the Council and consideration of public comments received on the proposed specifications. This is consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and implementing regulations and with the process described in the FMP.

Changes to the Final Rule

NMFS undertook a thorough review of the relevant comments received during the public comment period. For reasons described in the preceding section, no changes to the final rule were made in response to any of the comments received. This year, there are limited changes to TACs between the proposed and final specifications because, with two exceptions, no updated stock assessments could be prepared due to a disruption in the completion of the stock assessments that were scheduled to be updated in 2025. The final TACs are different than the proposed TACs for Pacific cod and deep-water flatfish based on updated information prepared and reviewed in 2025 and 2026. The final 2026 and 2027 Pacific cod TACs are higher based on the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment that was reviewed by the Plan Team and SSC in January 2026 and February 2026 and revised Council recommendations for TAC in February 2026. The final 2026 deep-water flatfish stock complex TAC is higher based on the harvest projection reviewed by the Plan Team

in September 2025 and the SSC in October 2025. In addition, the final 2026 and 2027 octopus TACs are lower than the proposed TACs to account for the State GHGs. These changes are compared in table A and the section Changes in TACs from the Proposed 2026 and 2027 Harvest Specifications in the GOA. The final TACs, including the limited changes to TACs between the proposed and final harvest specifications, are based on the most recent scientific, biological, ecosystem, harvest, and socioeconomic information and are consistent with the FMP, regulatory obligations, and the harvest strategy from the Final EIS and ROD.

Classification

NMFS is issuing this final rule pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Through previous actions, the FMP and regulations are designed to authorize NMFS to take this action pursuant to section 305(d) (see 50 CFR parts 679 and 680). The NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that the final harvest specifications are consistent with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law.

Executive Order (E.O.) 13175

This action will not have a substantial direct effect on one or more Alaska Native Tribes, on the relationship between the Federal Government and Alaska Native Tribes, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Alaska Native Tribes; therefore, consultation with Tribal officials under E.O. 13175 is not required, and the requirements of sections (5)(b) and (5)(c) of E.O. 13175 also do not apply. A Tribal summary impact statement under section (5)(b)(2)(B) and section (5)(c)(2) is not required and has not been prepared. No formal consultations were requested or held on the GOA harvest specifications.

Administrative Procedure Act

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(1) and (d)(3), the 30-day delay in effective date requirement does not apply to this rule because: (1) implementing this rule at 1200 hours A.l.t. on March 17, 2026 will relieve a restriction on fishery participants; and (2) NMFS finds there is good cause for the measures to take effect at 1200 hours A.l.t. on March 17, 2026. The Plan Team and the SSC recommended the OFL and ABC for each stock and stock complex based on the 2024 SAFE report, the 2025 harvest projection for deep-water flatfish, and the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment. The Council recommended TACs set less than or equal to the ABC for each stock or stock complex in December 2025 and February 2026. Accordingly, NMFS's review of the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications could not begin until after NMFS's consultation with the Council and after the public had time to comment on the proposed rule.

The 2026 harvest specifications expire on March 17, 2026. This action is necessary to timely establish harvest specifications for the remainder of the 2026 fishing year and for the start of the 2027 fishing year. If these final specifications are not effective by March 17, 2026, then the GOA groundfish fisheries will be closed until new harvest specifications are published and effective. Any delay in effectiveness would cause a lapse in fishing and substantial harm to the fishing industry, including vessel owners, captain and crew, processing facilities, and fishing communities. Therefore, the 30-day delay is not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(1).

Additionally, the 30-day delay requirement is not required for this rule because there is good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). If these final harvest specifications are not effective by the start of the 2026 Pacific halibut season as specified by the IPHC, the fixed gear sablefish fishery will not begin concurrently with the Pacific halibut IFQ season. NMFS implements a fixed gear sablefish TAC for 1 year in alignment with the Council's recommendation, and no TAC was specified for 2026 in the final 2025 and

2026 harvest specifications. The fixed gear sablefish fishery cannot open until a 2026 TAC is specified through the publication of the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications. If the sablefish IFQ fishery does not open concurrently with the halibut IFQ fishery, it would result in confusion for the industry and economic harm from unnecessary discard of sablefish that are caught along with Pacific halibut, as both fixed gear sablefish and Pacific halibut are managed under the same IFQ program. This action is necessary to allow the sablefish IFQ fishery to begin concurrently with the Pacific halibut IFQ season.

Making this rule effective at 1200 hours A.l.t. on March 17, 2026 provides the fishing industry with the earliest possible opportunity to plan and conduct its fishing operations with respect to TACs. Changes from the proposed to final 2026 and 2027 TACs in the GOA as discussed in the preamble of this action include an increase in the final 2026 and 2027 GOA Pacific cod TACs and the final 2026 GOA deep-water flatfish TAC. The changes to TACs between the proposed and final harvest specifications are based on the most recent scientific, biological, and socioeconomic information and are consistent with the FMP, regulatory obligations, and the harvest strategy from the Final EIS and ROD as described in the proposed and final harvest specifications. Therefore, in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), NMFS has demonstrated good cause and the 30-day delay requirement does not apply to this rule and the specifications can take effect on effect at 1200 hours A.l.t. on March 17, 2026.

Executive Orders (E.O.s) 12866 and 14192

This action is exempt from review under E.O. 12866 because it only implements annual catch limits in the GOA. This action is exempt from E.O. 14192 because it is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

National Environmental Policy Act

NMFS prepared a Final EIS for the Alaska groundfish harvest specifications and alternative harvest strategies (see **ADDRESSES**) and made it available to the public on January 12, 2007 (72 FR 1512). On February 13, 2007, NMFS issued the ROD for the Final EIS identifying the selected alternative (alternative 2). NMFS prepared a SIR for this action to address the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS (SEIS). Copies of the Final EIS, ROD, and annual SIRs (including the 2026 SIR for this action) are available from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**). The Final EIS analyzes the environmental, social, and economic consequences of alternative harvest strategies on resource components in the action area. Based on the analysis in the Final EIS, NMFS concluded that the preferred alternative harvest strategy (alternative 2) provides the best balance among relevant environmental, social, and economic considerations and allows for continued management of the groundfish fisheries based on the most recent, best scientific information. Specifically, alternative 2: (1) prevents overfishing because it is consistent with the ABCs for the target species recommended on the basis of the best scientific information; (2) sets TACs that fall within the BSAI OY range, which is set to reflect ecosystem constraints; (3) works within a broad range of existing and evolving fishery management measures meant to balance harvest for fishing and processing industries and communities and environmental harm and ecosystem impacts, while also facilitating continued harvests of BSAI groundfish; and (4) allows for management of target species within harvest limits that are based on the best scientific information available, including ecosystem information.

The preferred alternative is a harvest strategy in which TACs are set at a level within the range of ABCs recommended through the harvest specifications process. The sum of the TACs also must achieve the OY specified in the FMP and regulations. While

the specific numbers that the harvest strategy produces may vary from year to year, the methodology used for the preferred harvest strategy remains constant.

NMFS prepared the 2026 SIR to evaluate whether to prepare a SEIS for the 2026 and 2027 groundfish harvest specifications. A SEIS should be prepared if a major Federal action remains to occur and: (1) the agency makes substantial changes to the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or (2) there are substantial new circumstances or information about the significance of adverse effects that bear on the analysis. After reviewing the most recent, best available information, including the information contained in the SIR, SAFE report, and other updated assessments and reports, the Regional Administrator has determined that: (1) the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications, which were set according to the preferred alternative harvest strategy, do not constitute a substantial change in the action; and (2) there are no substantial new circumstances or information about the significance of adverse effects that bear on the analysis in the Final EIS. Any new information and circumstances do not present a seriously different picture of the likely environmental harms of the action to occur (*i.e.*, the implementation of these harvest specifications) beyond what was considered in the Final EIS such that the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications will not affect the human environment in a significant manner or to a significant extent not considered in the Final EIS. The 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications will result in environmental, social, and economic impacts within the scope of those analyzed and disclosed in the Final EIS. Therefore, a SEIS is not necessary to implement the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (FRFA)

Section 604 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) (5 U.S.C. 604) requires that, when an agency promulgates a final rule under 5 U.S.C. 553, after being required by that section or any other law to publish a general notice of proposed rulemaking, the agency

shall prepare a FRFA. The following constitutes the FRFA prepared for these final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

Section 604 of the RFA 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 (IRFA), 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 (SBA) 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; and (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 that 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 for 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications, apportionments, and halibut PSC limits for groundfish fisheries of the GOA on December 16, 2025 (90 FR 58185). NMFS prepared an IRFA to accompany the proposed action and

included the IRFA in the proposed rule. The comment period closed on January 5, 2026. No comments were received on the IRFA or on the economic impacts of the rule. The Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the SBA did not file any comments on the proposed rule.

Number and Description of Small Entities Regulated by This Rule

The entities directly regulated by this action are: (1) entities operating vessels with groundfish Federal fishing permits (FFPs) catching GOA FMP groundfish in Federal waters (including those receiving direct allocations of groundfish); (2) all entities operating vessels, regardless of whether they hold groundfish FFPs, catching GOA FMP groundfish in the State-waters parallel fisheries; and (3) all entities operating vessels fishing for halibut that have incidental catch of GOA FMP groundfish (whether or not they have FFPs).

For RFA purposes only, NMFS has established a small business size standard for businesses, including their affiliates, whose primary industry is commercial fishing (§ 200.2). A business primarily engaged in commercial fishing (North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 11411) is classified as a small business if it is independently owned and operated, is not dominant in its field of operation (including its affiliates), and has combined annual gross receipts not in excess of \$11 million for all its affiliated operations worldwide. NMFS formally reviewed this size standard determination in 2025 and subsequently issued a Notice of Determination. The review process was consistent with NMFS's small business size standards regulations, the SBA's review requirements under the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, the SBA's regulations establishing size standards, and SBA's size standards methodology. The Notice of Determination confirmed the NMFS-established and codified single small business size standard of \$11 million in annual gross receipts for all businesses in the commercial fishing industry continues to reflect the size distribution of all businesses in the commercial fishing industry. This standard remains appropriate for continued use for

RFA purposes only (90 FR 52917, November 24, 2025). Therefore, no revision of the standard is warranted at this time.

Using the most recent year of complete data (2024), there were 602 individual CV and CP entities with gross revenues less than or equal to \$11 million. This includes an estimated 601 small CV entities and one small CP entity in the GOA groundfish sector. The determination of entity size is based on vessel revenues and affiliated group revenues. This determination also includes an assessment of fisheries cooperative affiliations, although actual vessel ownership affiliations have not been completely established. However, the estimate of these 602 CVs and CPs may be an overstatement of the number of small entities because of the complexity of analyzing the links and affiliations across these vessels, particularly since many of them conduct operations in both Federal and State fisheries. The CVs had average gross revenues that varied by gear type. Average gross revenues for hook-and-line CVs, pot gear CVs, and trawl gear CVs are estimated to be \$460,000, \$920,000, and \$2,400,000 respectively. Average gross revenues for all CPs are confidential.

Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Other Compliance Requirements and Relevant Federal Rules that May Duplicate, Overlap, or Conflict with this Rule

This action does not impose recordkeeping and reporting requirements. This action sets TAC and PSC limits that NMFS utilizes for the management of the groundfish fisheries in the GOA. If a TAC limit or PSC limit has been or will be reached, NMFS can take action to prevent exceeding the specified limit. Entities operating in the GOA must follow any inseason actions that NMFS issues and comply with Federal regulations at 50 CFR part 679. The specific compliance requirements for entities operating in the GOA are set by regulations that are separate from this action. This action does not duplicate, overlap, or conflict with any Federal rules.

Description of Significant Alternatives That Minimize Adverse Impacts on Small Entities

This action implements the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications, apportionments, and halibut PSC limits for the groundfish fisheries of the GOA. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for groundfish during the 2026 and 2027 fishing years and is taken in accordance with the FMP implemented by NMFS and recommended by the Council pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The establishment of the final harvest specifications is governed by NMFS's harvest strategy designed in consultation with the Council for the catch of groundfish in the GOA. The harvest strategy was selected previously from among five alternatives as described in the Final EIS, with the preferred alternative harvest strategy being one in which the TACs fall within the range of ABCs recommended through the harvest specifications process. Under this preferred alternative harvest strategy, TACs are set to a level that falls within the range of ABCs recommended by the SSC and the sum of the TACs achieve the OY specified in the FMP and regulations. While the specific TAC numbers that the harvest strategy produces may vary from year to year, the methodology used for the preferred harvest strategy remains constant.

For most species, the OFLs and ABCs are based on recommendations prepared by the Plan Team and SSC in 2024 for final 2025 and 2026 OFLs and ABCs. For these species, the final OFLs and ABCs for 2026 are unchanged from these previously reviewed 2025 and 2026 final amounts, and the 2027 amounts are set equal to 2026 amounts and will be superseded in the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications. These OFLs and ABCs were reviewed by the Plan Team in September 2025 and were reviewed and recommended by the SSC in October and December 2025. For deep-water flatfish, the final 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs are based on a harvest projection that was reviewed by the Plan Team in September 2025 and the SSC in October 2025. For Pacific cod, the final 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs are based on an updated stock assessment that was reviewed by the Plan Team in January 2026 and the SSC in February 2026.

The final 2026 and 2027 TACs associated with preferred harvest strategy are those recommended by the Council in December 2025 and February 2026. The Council based its TAC recommendations on those of its AP, and those recommendations are consistent with the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations. The sum of all TACs remains within the OY for the GOA consistent with § 679.20(a)(1)(i)(B).

The final 2026 and 2027 OFLs and ABCs are based on the best available biological information, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised technical methods to calculate stock biomass. The final 2026 and 2027 TACs are based on the best available biological and socioeconomic information. The final 2026 and 2027 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks, as well as the ecosystem and socioeconomic information, presented in the 2024 SAFE report (including the 2024 GOA ESR and any ESPs), the abbreviated updated 2025 GOA ESR, the 2025 harvest projection of the deep-water flatfish stock complex, and the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment and ESP. Accounting for the most recent information to set the final OFLs, ABCs, and TACs is consistent with the objectives for this action, as well as National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(2); 50 CFR 600.315) that actions shall be based on the best scientific information available. The SAFE report also includes information on the economic condition of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska through the Economic SAFE report. Data are available through 2024.

Under this action, the final ABCs reflect harvest amounts that are less than the specified OFLs. The final TACs are within the range of final ABCs recommended by the SSC and do not exceed the biological limits recommended by the SSC (the ABCs and OFLs). Specifying TACs that do not exceed ABCs and ABCs that do not exceed OFLs is consistent with the objectives for this action, the FMP, and National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(1)) and implementing regulations (50 CFR

600.310). For most species and species groups in the GOA, NMFS implements through this final rule, in alignment with recommendations from the Council, TACs equal to ABCs, which is intended to maximize harvest opportunities in the GOA, unless other conservation or management reasons support setting TAC amounts less than the ABCs.

In this final rule, NMFS implements TACs that are less than the ABCs in alignment with recommendations from the Council for the following species and species groups: pollock; Pacific cod; shallow-water flatfish in the Western GOA; arrowtooth flounder in the Western GOA; flathead sole in the Western GOA; other rockfish in the SEO District; Atka mackerel; and octopus. These reductions were reviewed and recommended by the Council's AP, and the Council in turn adopted the AP's recommendations for the final 2026 and 2027 TACs. Setting TACs equal to ABCs for some species may not result in increased harvest opportunities for those species. This is due to a variety of reasons. There may be a lack of commercial or market interest in some species. Additionally, there are fixed, and therefore constraining, PSC limits associated with the harvest of the GOA groundfish species that can lead to an underharvest of flatfish TACs. For this reason, the shallow-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, and flathead sole TACs in the Western GOA are set to allow for harvest opportunities for these target species while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other fisheries, including other groundfish fisheries, or the halibut IFQ directed fishery. The other rockfish TAC in the SEO District is set to support incidental catch in other fisheries, and the Atka mackerel TAC is also set to accommodate incidental catch in other fisheries. Finally, the TACs for W/C/WYK pollock, GOA Pacific cod, and GOA octopus are set to account for the State's GHs so that the ABCs are not exceeded.

Based upon the best available scientific data, and in consideration of the objectives of this action, there are no significant alternatives to the final rule that have the potential to accomplish the stated objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and any other

applicable statutes and that have the potential to minimize any significant adverse economic impact of the final rule on small entities. This action is economically beneficial to entities operating in the GOA, including small entities. The action specifies TACs for commercially valuable species in the GOA and allows for the continued prosecution of the fishery, thereby creating the opportunity for fishery revenue. After public process, during which the Council and NMFS solicited input from stakeholders, the Council concluded and NMFS likewise determines that these final harvest specifications would best accomplish the stated objectives articulated in the preamble for this final rule and in applicable statutes and would minimize to the extent practicable adverse economic impacts on the universe of directly regulated small entities.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This final rule contains no information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)

A formal section 7 consultation under the ESA was completed for the GOA groundfish fisheries. In a biological opinion and conference opinion dated December 23, 2024, the NMFS Alaska Regional Administrator determined that the GOA groundfish fisheries are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or species proposed for listing.

Adverse impacts on marine mammals resulting from fishing activities conducted under this action are discussed in the Final EIS. Through a separate action, NMFS has issued a valid MMPA section 101(a)(5)(E) permit for the incidental, but not intentional, take of ESA-listed species during commercial fishing operations for the GOA groundfish fishery identified as a Category II fishery that interacts with ESA-listed species (89 FR 50270, June 13, 2024).

Small Entity Compliance Guide

Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 states that, for each rule or group of related rules for which an agency is required to prepare a FRFA, the agency shall publish one or more guides to assist small entities in complying with the rule and shall designate such publications as “small entity compliance guides.” The agency shall explain the actions a small entity is required to take to comply with a rule or group of rules.

The tables contained in this final rule are provided online and serve as the 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 2026 and 2027 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 2026 and 2027 fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the FMP. It is taken in accordance with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and regulations at 50 CFR parts 600, 679, and 680. This action affects all fishermen who participate in the GOA fisheries. The specific OFL, ABC, TAC, and PSC amounts are provided in tables in this final rule to assist the reader. Affected fishery participants are advised to review this final rule, including its tables.

Information to assist small entities in complying with this final rule is provided online. The OFL, ABC, TAC, and PSC tables are individually available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/sustainable-fisheries/alaska-groundfish-harvest-specifications>. Explanatory information on the relevant regulations supporting the harvest specifications is also found in footnotes to the tables. Harvest specification changes are also available from the same online source, which includes applicable **Federal Register** notices, information bulletins, and other supporting materials. NMFS will announce

closures and openings of directed fishing and other inseason adjustments in the **Federal Register** and information bulletins released by the Alaska Region. Affected fishery participants should keep themselves informed of such actions. Copies of the tables and/or this final rule are also available upon request.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 1540(f); 16 U.S.C. 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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