



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 260210-0044]

RIN 0648-BN75

Fisheries Off West Coast States; Coastal Pelagic Species Fisheries; Biennial Specifications; 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 Specifications for Pacific Mackerel

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

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS is implementing annual harvest specifications and management measures for Pacific mackerel in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off the West Coast for the fishing year July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, and the fishing year July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. These specifications include overfishing limits (OFL), allowable biological catch (ABC), annual catch limits (ACL), harvest guidelines (HG), and annual catch targets (ACT) for each respective fishing year. If the fishery attains the ACT for either fishing year, 8,143 metric tons (mt) for 2025–2026 or 9,448 mt for 2026–2027, the directed fishery will close, reserving the 1,000 mt difference between the HG and ACT as a set-aside for incidental landings in other coastal pelagic species (CPS) fisheries and other sources of mortality. The HG is 9,143 mt for 2025–2026 and 10,448 mt for 2026–2027. This rulemaking is made pursuant to the CPS Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and is intended to conserve and manage the Pacific mackerel stock off the U.S. West Coast.

DATES: Effective [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Laura Gray, West Coast Region, NMFS, (301) 427-8490, Laura.Gray@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, NMFS manages the Pacific mackerel fishery in the U.S. EEZ off the West Coast in accordance with the CPS FMP. The CPS FMP and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 660.508) require NMFS to set annual harvest specifications for the Pacific mackerel fishery based on the annual specification framework and control rules in the FMP. The Pacific mackerel fishing season runs from July 1 to June 30. The purpose of this action is to implement harvest specifications for the 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 fishing seasons: OFL, ABC, ACL, HG, and ACT. This final rule adopts, without changes, the harvest specifications that NMFS proposed in the rule published on August 25, 2025 (90 FR 41376). The proposed rule for this action included additional background on the specifications and details on how the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) derived its recommended specifications for Pacific mackerel. Those details are not repeated here.

NMFS is implementing Pacific mackerel harvest specifications for both the 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 fishing seasons, as recommended by the Council (table 1). Any Pacific mackerel harvested between July 1, 2025, and the effective date of the final rule will count toward the 2025–2026 OFL, ABC, ACL, HG, and ACT. These harvest specifications are based on the OFL and ABC control rules established in the CPS FMP, recommendations from the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and other advisory bodies, and biomass estimates of 61,737 mt (2025–2026) and 67,954 mt (2026–2027). The biomass estimates are the result of a catch-only stock assessment the NMFS Southwest Fishery Science Center (SWFSC) completed in March 2025. At the April 2025 Council meeting, the Council’s SSC reviewed and endorsed, and the Council

adopted, the 2025 catch-only stock assessment and resulting biomass estimates as the best scientific information available for setting harvest specifications for the 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 Pacific mackerel fishing seasons. The uncertainty surrounding these biomass estimates for Pacific mackerel for the 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 fishing seasons was explicitly taken into consideration in the development of these harvest specifications.

Table 1 – Pacific Mackerel Harvest Specifications for the 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 Fishing Seasons

Harvest Specifications	2025–2026	2026–2027
OFL	12,965 mt	14,270 mt
ACL = ABC	10,084 mt	11,099 mt
HG	9,143 mt	10,448 mt
ACT	8,143 mt	9,448 mt

Under this action, in the unlikely event that catch reaches the ACT in either fishing season, directed fishing would close, while the difference between the HG and ACT (1,000 mt) would be reserved as a set-aside for incidental landings in other fisheries and other sources of mortality.¹ For the remainder of the fishing season, incidental landings in CPS fisheries would be constrained to a 45 percent incidental catch allowance (in other words, no more than 45 percent by weight of the CPS landed per trip may be Pacific mackerel); and in non-CPS fisheries, up to 3 mt of Pacific mackerel incidental catch could be landed per fishing trip. The incidental catch set-aside is intended to allow continued operation of fisheries for other stocks, particularly other CPS stocks that may school with Pacific mackerel.

The Regional Administrator, NMFS West Coast Region, will publish a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing the date of any closure of directed fishing if and when

¹ Directed fishing for live bait and minor directed fishing is allowed to continue during a closure of the directed fishery.

harvest levels reach or exceed the ACT. Additionally, to ensure the regulated community is informed of any closure, NMFS will also make announcements through other means available, including by email to fishermen, processors, and state fishery management agencies.

The 30-day public comment period for the proposed rule (90 FR 41376, August 25, 2025) ended on September 24, 2025. Two comments in support of the rulemaking were received.

Classification

Pursuant to section 304(b)(1)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this final rule is consistent with the CPS FMP, other provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law.

This final rule has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866. This final rule is exempt from the requirements of E.O. 14192 because it is a routine fishing action.

The Chief Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration during the proposed rule stage that this action would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities for the purposes of the Regulatory Flexibility Act. The factual basis for the certification was published in the proposed rule (90 FR 41376, August 25, 2025) and is not repeated here. No comments were received regarding this certification. As a result, a final regulatory flexibility analysis was not required and none was prepared.

A Tribal summary impact statement under section (5)(b)(2)(B) and section (5)(c)(2)(B) of E.O. 13175 was not required for this final rule because this action does not impose substantial direct compliance costs on Indian Tribal Governments and this action does not preempt Tribal law. A Tribal summary impact statement has therefore not been prepared.

This final rule contains no information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. There are no relevant Federal rules that may duplicate, overlap, or conflict with the proposed action.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 660

Fisheries, Fishing, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: February 26, 2026

Samuel D. Rauch, III

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, NMFS amends 50 CFR part 660 as follows:

PART 660—FISHERIES OFF WEST COAST STATES

1. The authority citation for part 660 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*, and 16 U.S.C. 7001 *et seq.*

2. In § 660.511, revise paragraphs (i)(1) and (2) to read as follows:

§ 660.511 Catch restrictions.

* * * * *

(i) * * *

(1) For the Pacific mackerel fishing season July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, the harvest guideline is 9,143 mt and the ACT is 8,143 mt; and

(2) For the Pacific mackerel fishing season July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, the harvest guideline is 10,448 mt and the ACT is 9,448 mt.

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