



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF098]

### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area; Cost Recovery Fee Notice for the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program

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

**ACTION:** Notice of standard prices fee percentage.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS publishes the fee percentage for cost recovery for the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative (PCTC) Program. The fee percentage for 2025 is 3 percent. This notice is intended to provide the 2025 fee percentage to calculate the required payment for cost recovery fees that were due by August 31, 2025.

**DATES:** The fee percentage is valid on [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dana Whitely, Fee Coordinator, 907-586-7105.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

Section 304(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) authorizes and requires that NMFS collect cost recovery fees for limited access privilege programs. Cost recovery fees include NMFS' actual costs directly related to its management, data collection, and enforcement of the programs. Section 304(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates that cost recovery fees not exceed 3 percent of the annual ex-vessel value of fish harvested under any program

subject to a cost recovery fee and that the fee be collected either at the time of landing, filing of a landing report, or sale of such fish during a fishing season or in the last quarter of the calendar year in which the fish is harvested.

NMFS manages the PCTC Program as a limited access privilege program. On August 8, 2023, NMFS published a final rule to implement the PCTC Program (88 FR 53704). The PCTC Program allocates total allowable catch of Pacific cod to trawl catcher vessels and processors in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI). Participants in the PCTC Program must form a cooperative and associate with a processor. The PCTC Program includes a process for calculating and administering cost recovery fees under 50 CFR 679.135. The annual PCTC Program cost recovery process builds on other existing cost recovery requirements implemented under other programs. The fee liability is based on the ex-vessel value of fish harvested in the PCTC Program. Each year, NMFS publishes a notice announcing the fee percentage in the **Federal Register**. The Regional Administrator sends invoices to cooperatives before July 31.

Each PCTC Program cooperative is responsible for payment of the cost recovery fee assessed on Pacific cod landed under the PCTC Program. Each cooperative must submit any cost recovery fee liability payment(s) no later than August 31. The total dollar amount of the fee due is determined by multiplying the NMFS published fee percentage by the annual ex-vessel value of Cooperative Quota (CQ) landings under the PCTC Program, as described in this notice.

Failure to pay cost recovery fee liabilities by August 31 will result in NMFS disapproval of a cooperative's application to transfer CQ or issue a CQ permit the following year until full payment of the fee liability is received by NMFS. NMFS will not issue a CQ permit until NMFS receives a complete application for CQ issuance and confirmation of the full payment of any cost recovery fee liability.

### **Standard Price**

For purposes of calculating cost recovery fees, NMFS uses a standard ex-vessel price (standard price) for Pacific cod. A standard price is determined using information on landings purchased (volume) and ex-vessel value paid (value). NMFS annually receives information used to calculate the Pacific cod standard price in the existing BSAI Pacific cod Ex-vessel Volume and Value Report, which is submitted in early November of each year. NMFS uses this existing data source to calculate standard prices and thus determine the annual PCTC Program fishery value, which, along with the direct program costs, is used to calculate the annual PCTC Program cost recovery fee percentage. The standard prices are described in U.S. dollars per pound for landings made during the previous year. NMFS published the standard price of \$0.25 per pound for Pacific cod for 2025 in the **Federal Register** on November 29, 2024 (89 FR 94710).

Each landing made under the PCTC Program is multiplied by the standard price to arrive at an ex-vessel value for each landing. These values are summed together to arrive at the ex-vessel value of Pacific cod (*i.e.*, fishery value).

### **Fee Percentage**

Annually, NMFS calculates the total costs directly related to the management, data collection, and enforcement of the program (direct program costs). NMFS captures direct PCTC program costs through an established accounting system that allows NMFS staff to track labor, travel, contracts, rent, and procurement costs. For 2025, the direct program costs for the PCTC Program were tracked from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. A more detailed explanation will be provided in the annual Cost Recovery Report, which will be published in April of 2026.

NMFS then calculates the applicable fee percentage according to the factors and methods described at § 679.135 for the PCTC Program. NMFS used the standard price of \$0.25 to calculate the fee percentage applied to landings made in 2025. NMFS determined the fee percentage that applies to landings made in the A and B seasons,

which extend from January 20 to June 10, 2025, by dividing the direct program costs by the value of the catch subject to the cost recovery fee.

Using the fee percentage formula described generally above, the estimated percentage of direct program costs to fishery value for the 2025 calendar year is 3.56 percent for the PCTC Program; however, the fee percentage must not exceed 3 percent pursuant to section 304(d)(2)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Therefore, the 2025 fee percentage is set at 3 percent. For 2025, NMFS applied the fee percentage to each PCTC landing that was debited from a CQ allocation between January 20 and June 10 to calculate the fee liability for each cooperative. A PCTC Program cooperative's 2025 fee payments must be submitted to NMFS on or before August 31, 2025. Payment must be made in accordance with the payment methods set forth in § 679.135(a)(3).

The 2025 fee percentage of 3 percent is higher than the 2024 fee percentage of 1.92 percent. Net fishery management costs for 2025 increased by 1.02 percent when compared to 2024 and total fishery value decreased by 54.89 percent, resulting in a capped fee percentage.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: April 7, 2026.

**David R. Blankinship,**

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*National Marine Fisheries Service.*