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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 679**

**[Docket No. 261124-0005; RTID 0648-XG139]**

# Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Gulf of Alaska; 2027 and 2028 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish

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

**ACTION**: Proposed rule; harvest specifications and request for comments.

**SUMMARY**: NMFS proposes 2027 and 2028 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 2027 and 2028 fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish fisheries of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP). The 2027 harvest specifications supersede those previously set in the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications, and the 2028 harvest specifications will be superseded in early 2028 when the final 2028 and 2029 harvest specifications are published. 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**: Comments must be received by [i*nsert date 30 days after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*].

**ADDRESSES:** A plain language summary of this proposed rule is available at *https://www.regulations.gov/docket/NOAA-NMFS-2026-3301*. You may submit

comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2026-3301, by any of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission*: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to *https://www.regulations.gov* and enter NOAA-NMFS-2026-3301 in the Search box. Click on the "Comment" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- *Mail*: Submit written comments to Gretchen Harrington, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.
- *Instructions*: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on *https://www.regulations.gov* without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

Electronic copies of the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS), Record of Decision (ROD) for the Final EIS, and the annual Supplementary Information Reports (SIR) to the Final EIS prepared for this action are available from *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/alaska-groundfish-harvest-specifications-environmental-impact-statement-eis*. An updated 2027 SIR for the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications will be available from the same source.

The final 2024 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report for the groundfish resources of the GOA, the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment, and the 2025 harvest projection for the deep-water flatfish stock complex, and SAFE reports from previous years are available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at 1007 West Third, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252, phone 907-271-2809, or from the Council's website at *https://www.npfmc.org*, and at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/north-pacific-groundfish-stock-assessments-and-fishery-evaluation*. The 2026 SAFE report for the groundfish resources of the GOA will be available from the same sources.

**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 and recommended, and NMFS approved, the FMP 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 679.20(a)(2)). Section 679.20(c)(1) further requires NMFS to 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. The proposed harvest specifications in tables 1 through 19 of this rule satisfy these requirements. For 2027 and 2028, the sum of the proposed TAC amounts is 465,714 mt.

Under § 679.20(c)(3), NMFS will publish the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications after: (1) considering comments received within the comment period (see **DATES**); (2) consulting with the Council at its December 2026 meeting; (3) considering information presented in the 2027 SIR to the Final EIS that assesses the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS (see **ADDRESSES**); and (4) considering relevant information, including information presented in the final 2026 SAFE report and the Ecosystem Status Report (ESR) for the GOA ecosystem. Consistent with past years, the final rule implementing the 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications would be effective for 1 year from the publication of that final rule, which is anticipated to publish in March 2027.

**Other Actions Affecting the 2027 and 2028 GOA Harvest Specifications**

*Amendment 128 to the FMP: Small Sablefish Release*

At its April 2025 meeting, the Council recommended allowing the careful release of sablefish in the sablefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) fixed gear fishery. This action would allow the IFQ catcher vessel (CV) sector to release sablefish less than 22 inches (55.88 cm) total body length and establish sablefish discard allowances (SDAs) to account for mortality from discards and careful release handling requirements. NMFS is currently developing the proposed rule to implement amendment 128. If the rule and amendment are approved by NMFS, the Council's recommendation would be implemented in two stages: (1) in 2027, discards would be allowed but an SDA would not be established, and (2) in 2028 and years after, discards would be allowed and NMFS would implement an SDA to account for discard mortality of released sablefish.

**Proposed ABC and TAC Specifications**

The overfishing limit (OFL), ABC, and annual catch limit (ACL) are reference points that are specified at the stock or stock complex level (FMP Section 3.2.1, § 600.310(e), (f)). For Alaska groundfish, ACL is set equal to ABC (FMP Section 3.2.3.3.2). Historically, these sub-area spatial apportionments of the ABC for a stock or

stock complex were identified as ABCs even though they did not represent the ABC, or the annual catch limit, for the stock or stock complex. At its October 2025 meeting, the Council recommended using the term Biologically-informed Recommended Distribution (BRD) to refer to the spatial apportionment of the ABC for a stock or stock complex. The Council's motion is available at *https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=5c22a943-5e87-4fae-b02f-f41485b9a6ef.pdf&fileName=MOTION%20C5c%20Spatial%20Apportionment.pdf*. This terminology change more accurately reflects that ABC and ACL are specified for the stock or stock complex level, whereas the BRD is a recommendation at the subarea level. This change does not represent a substantive change from how spatial apportionments have been calculated in the past as the BRDs will continue to be recommendations to spatially apportion harvest based on survey or catch data and will continue to be based on only biological, not socio-economic, information. The intent of this terminology change is to improve clarity and distinguish between stock-level reference points and subarea level distributions.

This change is reflected in table 1 of this proposed rule, with BRDs now identified as a separate column from the ABCs specified for each stock or stock complex. Consistent with past practice for the apportionment of an ABC as subarea ABCs, BRDs will be recommended by stock assessment authors, the BSAI Groundfish Plan Team (Plan Team), and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), along with OFLs and ABCs. BRDs will continue to be used to assist the Council in making its subarea TAC recommendations. OFLs and ABCs will continue to be included in the specification tables (see table 1).

In October 2026, the Council, its SSC, and its Advisory Panel (AP) reviewed the most recent biological and harvest information on the condition of the GOA groundfish stocks, including the 2024 SAFE report. In 2025, there was a disruption in the completion

of the stock assessments that were scheduled for update in 2025. As a result, those stock assessments were not completed in time for the Plan Team's meeting in November 2025 and the Plan Team was unable to meet to review, update, and finalize the 2025 SAFE report. There were two exceptions: the deep-water flatfish stock complex and Pacific cod. Consistent with the schedule for reviewing harvest projections, the Council received an updated harvest projection for deep-water flatfish in October 2025 and recommended the harvest specifications for this complex prior to any disruptions. Following a request from the Council, NMFS updated, reviewed, and finalized the stock assessment for Pacific cod in the GOA in January 2026, at which time the Council recommended 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications for GOA Pacific cod. The final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications were based on the best information available from the 2024 SAFE report, the 2025 deep-water flatfish harvest projection, and the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment (see **ADDRESSES**).

The proposed 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications are based on the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications published on March 11, 2026 (91 FR 11902), which were set after consideration of the most recent final 2024 SAFE report; the 2025 SAFE report for Pacific cod; stock specific risk tables included within the 2024 and 2025 SAFE reports; the 2025 deep-water flatfish harvest projection; Plan Team recommendations from the 2024 cycle and 2025 and 2026 September 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 include biomass and survey trends; information from the 2025 and 2026 Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) surveys; and available Ecosystem Status Report (ESR) information including the 2024 ESR, an abbreviated ESR finalized in January 2026 for Pacific cod, and a preview presented to the Plan Team and SSC in September and October 2026, respectively. The SAFE report contains a review of the latest scientific analyses and

estimates of each stock or stock complex's biomass and other biological parameters including possible future condition of the stocks, as well as summaries of the available information on the GOA ecosystem and the economic condition of the 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 final 2026 SAFE report, including individual stock assessments, will be publicly available (see **ADDRESSES**).

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 typically updated annually. These ESRs include ecosystem report cards, ecosystem assessments, and ecosystem-based management indicators (*i.e.*, climate indices, sea surface temperature), which together provide context for ecosystem-based fisheries management in Alaska. The ESRs inform stock assessments and are integrated in the annual harvest recommendations through inclusion in stock assessment-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 OFL and ABC, and for the Council's TAC recommendations. The SAFE reports and the ESRs are presented at the October and December Council meetings before the SSC, AP, and the Council for making groundfish harvest recommendations, and aid NMFS in reviewing and implementing these annual groundfish harvest specifications. An ESR is compiled for the GOA ecosystem. The 2024 SAFE report includes the 2024 GOA ESR, and after the disruptions to the stock assessment process in 2025, NMFS provided and finalized in January 2026 an updated abbreviated 2025 GOA ESR, which focused on relevant ecosystem indicators informative for Pacific cod.

In addition to the 2024 SAFE report and GOA ESRs, the Plan Team, SSC, and Council also reviewed preliminary survey data from 2026, initial climate and oceanography updates, updates on ecological and socioeconomic profiles for certain stocks, and summaries of potential changes to models and methodologies. From these data and analyses, the Plan Team recommends, and the SSC sets, the proposed 2027 and 2028 OFL and ABC for each stock and stock complex and subarea BRDs. The proposed 2027 and 2028 OFLs and ABCs are based on the 2024 SAFE report, the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment, and the 2025 harvest projection for the deep-water flatfish stock complex (see **ADDRESSES**). The AP and Council recommended that the proposed 2027 and 2028 TACs be set equal to proposed ABCs and subarea BRDs for all stocks and stock complexes, except for the stock and stock complexes discussed below. The term subarea ABCs has been changed to the term BRDs, but the amount for each BRD remains the same as the subarea ABCs from the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

The proposed 2027 and 2028 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. The FMP tier structure was used to calculate the proposed 2027 and 2028 OFLs and ABCs for each groundfish stock and stock complex. The SSC adopted the proposed 2027 and 2028 OFLs, ABCs, and BRDs recommended by the Plan Team for all groundfish stocks. The proposed 2027 and 2028 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, ABC, and BRD recommendations and the AP's TAC recommendations for all groundfish stocks.

NMFS has reviewed the recommendations of the SSC and Council for OFLs, ABCs, BRDs, and TACs for stocks and stock complexes in the GOA as well as any other relevant information. Based on that review, NMFS is proposing the OFLs, ABCs, and TACs set forth in the tables of this proposed rule as consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the FMP, and other applicable laws, subject to further review and consideration after public comment.

*Potential Changes Between Proposed and Final Specifications*

The proposed 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications are subject to change in the final harvest specifications to be published by NMFS, based on information in the 2026 SAFE report and pending consideration of public comment and SSC, AP, and Council recommendations for the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications during their December 2026 meetings.

In previous years, the most significant changes (relative to the amount of assessed tonnage of fish) to the OFLs and ABCs from the proposed to the final harvest specifications have been based on the most recent NMFS stock surveys. These surveys provide updated estimates of stock biomass and spatial distribution, and inform changes to the models used for producing stock assessments. At the September 2026 Plan Team meeting, NMFS scientists presented updated and new longline survey results. Scientists also discussed potential changes to assessment models and accompanying preliminary stock estimates. At the October 2026 Council meeting, the SSC reviewed this information. Stocks and stock complexes with proposed changes to assessment models include sablefish, Pacific cod, pollock, and rex sole. Model changes may result in changes to final OFLs, ABCs, BRDs, and TACs.

In November 2026, the Plan Team will consider updated survey results and updated stock assessments for groundfish stocks, which will be included in the 2026 SAFE report. The 2026 SAFE report will include any model changes; the most recent information, such as catch and survey data; and the updated ESR for the GOA ecosystem. If the 2026 SAFE report indicates that the stock biomass trend is increasing for a stock, then the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications for that stock may reflect an increase from the proposed harvest specifications. Conversely, if the 2026 SAFE report indicates that the stock biomass trend is decreasing for a stock, then the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications for that stock may reflect a decrease from the proposed harvest specifications.

At the December 2026 Council meeting, the SSC and Council plan to consider the most recent SAFE, ecosystem information presented in October as well as updated information on climate and oceanography, and other updated information including catch reports and survey information. The Council will also consider, as it normally does, SSC and AP recommendations, public testimony, and relevant written comments in recommending the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications. Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(2) and (3), the Council could recommend that NMFS adjust the final TACs if warranted based on the biological condition of groundfish stocks or a variety of socioeconomic considerations, or if required to ensure that the sum of the final TACs fall within the OY range.

*Specification and Apportionment of TAC Amounts*

NMFS's proposed apportionments of groundfish stocks are based on the distribution of biomass among the regulatory areas over which NMFS manages the stocks. The distribution of biomass is calculated based on survey or catch data and expressed as the BRD, which is a recommendation to spatially apportion harvest across subareas. For some stocks and stock complexes, the proposed subarea TAC is less than

the BRD for that subarea. The shallow-water flatfish TAC in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA (Western GOA), arrowtooth flounder TAC in the Western GOA, and flathead sole TAC in the Western GOA are set to conserve the halibut PSC limit for use in other fisheries. The other rockfish TAC in the Southeast Outside (SEO) District of the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA (Eastern GOA) is set to reduce discards of species in that stock complex. Atka mackerel is closed to directed fishing, and the proposed TAC is set less than the proposed ABC to account for incidental catch amounts in other fisheries. In addition, the pollock TAC for the combined Western/Central/West Yakutat (W/C/WYK), the Pacific cod TACs, and the octopus TAC are set to account for the guideline harvest levels (GHLs) for the State of Alaska (State) waters fisheries so that the stocks' ABCs are not exceeded. The reductions for pollock and Pacific cod are described below. The GOA-wide octopus TAC accounts for the GHL of 32 mt (70,000 lbs rounded).

Additional detail on apportionments of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish are described below. Additional regulations also govern the apportionment of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish and are described below and in subsequent stock-specific sections.

The proposed 2027 and 2028 TAC for the pollock stock in the combined W/C/WYK GOA 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 recommended that the sum of all State waters and Federal waters pollock removals not exceed ABC recommendations. State fisheries managers set the PWS GHL at 2.5 percent of the annual W/C/WYK pollock ABC. For 2027 and 2028, this yields a projected PWS pollock GHL of 3,326 mt, the same as the 2026 PWS GHL. After reductions for the PWS GHL, the remaining 2027 and 2028 W/C/WYK pollock TAC is then apportioned among four statistical areas (areas 610, 620, 630, and 640), as described

below and detailed in table 1. The total TACs for the four statistical areas, plus the State GHL, do not exceed the combined W/C/WYK ABC. The proposed 2027 and 2028 W/C/WYK pollock ABC is 133,075 mt, and the proposed TAC is 129,749 mt.

Apportionments of pollock to the W/C/WYK management areas are apportionments of the combined TAC. This more accurately reflects that such apportionments address management concerns, rather than biological or conservation concerns. In addition, apportionments allow NMFS to transfer TAC among statistical areas 610, 620, and 630 pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B), while ensuring that the ABC/ACL and TAC for the stock (W/C/WYK pollock) are not exceeded.

NMFS proposes pollock TACs in the Western GOA (area 610), Central Regulatory of the GOA (Central GOA) (areas 620 and 630), the West Yakutat (WYK) District (area 640), and the SEO District (area 650) of the Eastern GOA (see table 1). NMFS also proposes 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 between 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 details are provided below in table 2.

The proposed 2027 and 2028 Pacific cod TACs are set to accommodate the State's GHLs for Pacific cod in State waters in the Western GOA and Central GOA, as well as in PWS (in the Eastern GOA) (see table 1). The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council recommended that the sum of all State waters and Federal waters Pacific cod removals not exceed ABC recommendations. Accordingly, the Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, the 2027 and 2028 Pacific cod TACs in the Western GOA, Central GOA, and Eastern GOA to account for State GHLs. Therefore, the proposed 2027 and 2028 Pacific cod TACs are less than the proposed ABCs by the following amounts: (1) Western GOA, 2,795 mt; (2) Central GOA, 5,572 mt; and (3) Eastern GOA, 483 mt.

These amounts reflect the State's 2027 and 2028 GHLs in these areas, which are 35 percent of the Western GOA BRD and 25 percent of the Central GOA and Eastern GOA BRDs.

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 and seasonal apportionments are discussed in detail in a subsequent section and in table 4 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 5 and 6 list the proposed 2027 and 2028 allocations of the sablefish TAC in the GOA.

For 2027 and 2028, the Council recommends, and NMFS proposes, OFLs, ABCs, and TACs listed in table 1. These amounts are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report, the 2025 stock assessment for Pacific cod, and the harvest projection for the deep-water flatfish complex. The proposed ABCs reflect harvest amounts that are less than the specified OFLs. The sum of the BRDs for each stock or stock complex do not exceed ABCs. The proposed TACs are adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations and do not exceed ABCs or the sum of BRDs. The sum of the proposed TACs for all GOA groundfish is 465,714 mt for 2027 and 2028, which is within the OY range specified by the FMP and implementing regulations.

**Table 1–Proposed 2027 and 2028 OFLs, ABCs, BRDs, and TACs of Groundfish for the Western/Central/West Yakutat, Western, Central, and Eastern GOA, the WYK**

**and SEO Districts of the Eastern GOA, and GOA-wide [Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]**

| Stock | Area[1] | OFL | ABC | BRD | 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 |
| | Alaska-Wide 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 |
| | 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 | | 948 |
| Total | Total | 651,257 | 541,176 | | 465,714 |

**Note**: Area apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

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

[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 statistical areas 610, 620, and 630 are further divided by season, as detailed in table 2. 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 Regulatory Area of the 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 4 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 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. Tables 5 and 6 list the proposed 2027 and 2028 allocations of sablefish TACs.

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

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

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

[8] "Northern rockfish" means *Sebastes polyspinis*. For management purposes, the one 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). Beginning with the 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications, the stock complexes for demersal shelf rockfish and other rockfish changed. The seven species of the demersal shelf rockfish stock complex were separated from the other rockfish stock complex because the demersal shelf rockfish species are biologically and logistically different from the other rockfish species. This change resulted in two stock complexes for demersal shelf rockfish with separate OFLs and ABCs for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Area and the SEO District, respectively, and one stock complex for other rockfish, with two sub-area apportionments of ABCs (*i.e.*, BRDs) for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Area and the SEO District.

[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* (vermilion), *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*.

### *Proposed 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. Section 679.20(b)(3) authorizes NMFS to reapportion all or part of these reserves on a date deemed appropriate by NMFS. In 2026, NMFS reapportioned all of the reserves in the final harvest specifications. For 2027 and 2028, NMFS proposes reapportionment of each of the reserves for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sharks, and octopuses back to the original TAC from which the reserve was derived. NMFS expects, based on recent harvest patterns, that such reserves will not be necessary and that the entire TAC for each of these stocks will be caught in the 2027 and 2028 fishing years. The TACs in table 1 reflect this proposed reapportionment of reserve amounts to the original TAC for these stocks and stock complexes (*i.e.*, each proposed TAC for the above-mentioned stock or stock complex contains the full TAC recommended by the Council).

*Proposed 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 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). The pollock chapter of the 2024 SAFE report (see **ADDRESSES**) contains a comprehensive description of the apportionment and reasons for the minor changes from past apportionments. Pollock is specified between two seasons for the Western GOA and Central GOA (A and B seasons). 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 time series. A and B seasons from the assessment are aggregated into the A season for the fishery and C and D seasons from the assessment are aggregated into the B season for the

fishery for the purposes of apportioning TAC among statistical areas 610, 620, and 630 in these proposed specifications. This method is described and calculated in the 2024 GOA pollock assessment.

Within any fishing year, the amount by which a seasonal allowance is underharvested or overharvested may be added to, or subtracted from, the subsequent seasonal allowance 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 subsequent season in the other statistical areas, in proportion to the estimated biomass of the subsequent season and in an amount no more than 20 percent of the seasonal TAC apportionment in those statistical areas (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B)). The proposed 2027 and 2028 pollock TACs in the WYK District of 3,883 mt and the SEO District of 9,749 mt are not allocated by season.

Table 2 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 area apportionments and seasonal allowances of pollock in the Western GOA and Central GOA. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown. Section 679.20(a)(6)(i) requires allocation of 100 percent of the pollock TAC in all regulatory areas and all seasonal allowances to vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component after subtraction of amounts projected by the Regional Administrator to be caught by, or delivered to, the offshore component incidental to directed fishing for other groundfish stocks. Thus, the amount of pollock available for harvest by vessels harvesting pollock for processing by the offshore component is the amount of pollock that will be caught during directed fishing for groundfish stocks other than pollock, up to the maximum retainable amounts allowed by § 679.20(e) and (f). At this time, the

incidental catch allowance (ICA) of pollock is unknown and will be determined during the fishing year during the course of fishing activities by the offshore component.

**Table 2–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Distribution of Pollock in the Central and Western GOA; Area Apportionments; and Seasonal Allowances of Annual TAC[1] (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| Season[2] | Shumagin (610) | Chirikof (620) | Kodiak (630) | Total[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |

[1] Area apportionments and seasonal allowances may not total precisely due to rounding.

[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.

*Proposed Annual and Seasonal Apportionments of Pacific Cod TAC*

NMFS proposes allocations for the 2027 and 2028 Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA among gear and operational sectors consistent with § 679.20(a)(12)(i), which sets forth the sector allocations by percentage of TAC. NMFS also proposes seasonal apportionments of the Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA consistent with § 679.20(a)(12)(i), which specifies the apportionments by season for gear and operational sectors. 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. The remainder 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 (§§ 679.23(d)(3) and 679.20(a)(12)(i)). NMFS also proposes allocating the 2027 and 2028 Eastern GOA Pacific cod TACs annually between the inshore (90 percent) and offshore (10 percent) components as required by § 679.20(a)(6)(ii).

In the Western GOA, the Pacific cod TAC is allocated seasonally first to vessels using jig gear and then among catcher vessels (CVs) using hook-and-line gear, catcher/processors (C/Ps) using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, C/Ps using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear (§ 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A)). In the Central GOA, the Pacific cod TAC is allocated seasonally first to vessels using jig gear and then among 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, C/Ps using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, C/Ps using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear (§ 679.20(a)(12)(i)(B)). For 2027 and 2028, NMFS proposes apportioning the jig sector allocations for the Western and Central GOA between the A season (60 percent) and the B season (40 percent) as required by § 679.20(a)(12)(i). Excluding seasonal apportionments to the jig gear sector, NMFS proposes apportioning the remainder of the annual Pacific cod TACs as required by § 679.20(a)(12)(i) as follows: the seasonal apportionments of the annual TAC in the Western GOA are 63.84 percent to the A season and 36.16 percent to the B season, and in the Central GOA are 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 the Pacific cod allowance from the A season may be subtracted from, or added to, the subsequent B season allowance. In addition, any portion of the hook-and-line, trawl, pot, or jig sector allocations that is determined by NMFS as likely to go unharvested by a sector may be reallocated to other sectors for harvest during the remainder of the fishing year consistent with the factors set forth in § 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 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 of the final rule to implement amendment 83 to the FMP for a detailed discussion of the jig sector allocation process (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011)). Jig sector allocation increases are established for a minimum of 2 years. 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 proposing the 2027 and 2028 Pacific cod allocations to this sector based on its historical harvest performance through 2026. For 2027 and 2028, NMFS proposes that the jig sector receive 1.5 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Western GOA. The 2027 and 2028 allocation consists of a base allocation of 1.5 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod TAC and no harvest performance increases. This is a reduction of 1 percent, from 2.5 to 1.5 percent of the annual Western GOA Pacific cod TAC, because the jig sector is not expected to reach 90 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod allocation for the 2026 fishing year based on catch through October 2026 and the jig sector did not reach 90 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod allocation for the 2025 fishing year. For 2027 and 2028, NMFS proposes that the jig sector receive 5 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Central GOA. The 2027 and 2028 allocation consists of a base allocation of 1 percent of the Central GOA Pacific cod TAC and a harvest performance increase of 4 percent based on catch through October 2026 because the jig sector reached 90 percent of its Central GOA Pacific cod allocation for the 2026 fishing year. The Pacific cod jig gear allocations, catch, and percent allocation changes are listed in table 3.

**Table 3– Five-year Summary of Western GOA and Central GOA Pacific Cod Jig Gear Catch and Allocations**

| Area | Year | Initial Annual Percent of TAC | Initial TAC Allocation | Catch (mt) | Percent Caught of Initial TAC | Greater than 90% of Initial | Change to Percent Allocation for |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | Allocation | Allocation? | Next Fishing Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Western GOA | 2022 | 3.5 | 243 | 2 | 0.01 | N | Decrease 1 |
| | 2023 | 2.5 | 131 | 131 | 1.00 | Y | Increase 1 |
| | 2024 | 3.5 | 214 | 17 | 0.08 | N | None |
| | 2025 | 3.5 | 213 | 89 | 0.42 | N | None |
| | 2026 | 2.5 | 167 | 52 | 0.31 | N | Decrease 1 |
| Central GOA | 2022 | 1.0 | 113 | 3 | 0.03 | N | None |
| | 2023 | 1.0 | 111 | 246 | 2.22 | Y | Increase 1 |
| | 2024 | 2.0 | 309 | 303 | 0.98 | Y | Increase 1 |
| | 2025 | 3.0 | 462 | 444 | 0.96 | Y | Increase 1 |
| | 2026 | 4.0 | 862 | 844 | 0.98 | Y | Increase 1 |

NMFS will re-evaluate the 2026 harvest performance of the jig sector in the Western GOA and Central GOA when the 2026 fishing year is complete to determine whether to change the jig sector allocations proposed by this action in conjunction with the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications. Table 4 lists the seasonal apportionments and allocations of the proposed 2027 and 2028 Pacific cod TACs.

**Table 4–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Seasonal Apportionments and Allocations of Pacific Cod TAC Amounts in the GOA; Allocations to the Western GOA and Central GOA Sectors, and the Eastern GOA Inshore and Offshore Processing Components (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| 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 (1.5% of TAC) | 78 | n/a | 47 | n/a | 31 |
| Hook-and-line CV | 72 | 0.7 | 36 | 0.7 | 36 |
| Hook-and-line C/P | 1,012 | 10.9 | 557 | 8.9 | 455 |
| Trawl CV | 1,964 | 31.54 | 1,613 | 6.86 | 351 |
| Trawl C/P | 123 | 0.9 | 46 | 1.5 | 77 |
| Pot CV and Pot C/P | 1,943 | 19.8 | 1,012 | 18.2 | 931 |
| Total | 5,192 | 63.84 | 3,312 | 36.16 | 1,880 |
| Central GOA | | | | | |
| Jig (5% of TAC) | 836 | n/a | 502 | n/a | 334 |
| Hook-and-line < 50 CV | 2,319 | 9.32 | 1,479 | 5.29 | 840 |
| Hook-and-line >= 50 CV | 1,065 | 5.61 | 891 | 1.1 | 174 |
| Hook-and-line C/P | 810 | 4.11 | 652 | 1 | 158 |
| Trawl CV[1] | 5,967 | 25.29 | 4,017 | 16.29 | 1,950 |
| Trawl RP[1] | 637 | | | | 637 |
| Trawl C/P | 667 | 2 | 318 | 2.19 | 349 |
| Pot CV and Pot C/P | 4,416 | 17.83 | 2,832 | 9.98 | 1584 |
| Total | 16,717 | 64.16 | 10,691 | 35.84 | 6,026 |
| Eastern GOA | | Inshore (90% of Annual TAC) | | Offshore (10% of Annual TAC) | |
| Total | 1,450 | 1,305 | | 145 | |

**Note**: Area apportionments and seasonal allowances may not total precisely due to rounding.

[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 9 of this rule: Proposed 2027 and 2028 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P Cooperatives).

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

Section 679.20(a)(4)(i) and (ii) requires allocations of sablefish TACs for each of the regulatory areas and districts to fixed and trawl gear. In the Western 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 catch of sablefish while directed fishing for other target groundfish species using trawl gear (§ 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 proposes, specifying for the catch of sablefish in other target groundfish fisheries 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. This proposed action allocates 100 percent of the sablefish TAC in the SEO District to vessels using fixed gear. This results in proposed 2027 allocations of 412 mt to trawl gear and 2,240 mt to fixed gear in the WYK District, and a proposed 2027 allocation of 5,589 mt to fixed gear in the SEO District. This also results in a 2028 allocation of 412 mt to trawl gear in the WYK District. Table 5 lists the allocations of the proposed 2027 sablefish TACs to fixed and trawl gear. Table 6 lists the allocations of the proposed 2028 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 would be established for 2027 and 2028 so that retention of sablefish by trawl gear can commence in January in the second year of the groundfish harvest

specifications. Both the proposed 2027 and 2028 trawl allocations are specified in these proposed harvest specifications in tables 5 and 6, 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 5 proposes the 2027 fixed gear allocations, and the 2028 fixed gear allocations will be specified in the 2028 and 2029 harvest specifications.

**Table 5–Proposed 2027 Sablefish TAC Amounts in the GOA and Allocations to Fixed and Trawl Gear (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| 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**: Area apportionments and seasonal allowances may not total precisely due to rounding.

[1] The proposed trawl allocation of sablefish to the Central GOA is further apportioned to the Rockfish Program cooperatives (990 mt). See table 9: Proposed 2027 and 2028 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P Cooperatives. This results in 934 mt being available for the non-Rockfish Program trawl fisheries.

[2] The proposed 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 6–Proposed 2028 Sablefish TAC Amounts in the GOA and Allocations to Fixed and Trawl Gear (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| 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**: Area apportionments and seasonal allowances may not total precisely due to rounding.

[1] The Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, that the proposed 2028 harvest specifications for the fixed gear sablefish IFQ fisheries not be specified in the 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications. The 2028 fixed gear allocations will be specified in the final 2028 and 2029 harvest specifications.

[2] The proposed trawl allocation of sablefish to the Central GOA is further apportioned to the Rockfish Program cooperatives (990 mt). See table 9: Proposed 2027 and 2028 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P Cooperatives. This results in 934 mt being available for the non-Rockfish Program trawl fisheries.

[3] The proposed 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.

*Proposed Allocations, Apportionments, and Sideboard Limitations for the Rockfish Program*

These proposed 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications for the GOA include the fishery cooperative allocations and sideboard limitations established by the Rockfish Program. Program participants are primarily trawl CVs and trawl C/Ps, with limited participation by vessels using longline gear. The Rockfish Program assigns quota share and cooperative quota to trawl 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 Program (LLP) license with rockfish quota share to form a rockfish cooperative with other persons, and allows holders of C/P LLP licenses to opt out of the fishery. The Rockfish Program also has an entry-level fishery for rockfish primary species for vessels using longline gear. 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 the ICA needs in other directed 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 allocates 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 Sideboard and Halibut PSC 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 entry-level longline fishery in 2027 and 2028. The allocations of primary species to the entry-level longline fishery may increase incrementally each year if the catch exceeds 90 percent of the allocation of a species. The incremental increase in the allocations would continue each year until reaching the maximum percentage of the TAC assigned to the Rockfish Program for that species. In 2026, it is projected that the catch of Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish did not exceed the 90 percent threshold. Therefore, NMFS is not proposing any increases to the 2027 and 2028 entry-level longline fishery allocations in the Central GOA. The remainder of the TACs for the rockfish primary species, after subtracting the ICAs, would be allocated to the Rockfish Program CV and C/P cooperatives (§ 679.81(a)(2)(iii)). Table 7 lists the allocations of the proposed 2027 and 2028 TACs for each rockfish primary species to the entry-level longline fishery, the potential incremental increases for future years, and the maximum percentages of the TACs assigned to the Rockfish Program that may be allocated to the rockfish entry-level longline fishery.

**Table 7–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Allocations of Rockfish Primary Species to the Entry-Level Longline Fishery in the Central GOA (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

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

Allocations among vessels belonging to Rockfish Program CV or C/P cooperatives are not included in these proposed harvest specifications. Rockfish Program applications for CV cooperatives and C/P cooperatives are not due to NMFS until March 1 of each calendar year; therefore, NMFS cannot calculate 2027 and 2028 cooperative allocations in conjunction with these proposed harvest specifications. Cooperative allocations are calculated based on the formulas set forth in § 679.81(b), (c), and (e). NMFS will announce the 2027 cooperative allocations after March 1 in the **Federal Register**.

Section 679.81 requires allocations of rockfish primary species among various sectors of the Rockfish Program. Table 8 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 allocations of rockfish primary species in the Central GOA to the entry-level longline fishery and rockfish CV and C/P cooperatives in the Rockfish Program. NMFS also proposes 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 in the Central GOA by other groundfish fisheries and may be updated in the final specifications depending on any new catch information from the 2026 fishing year.

**Table 8–Proposed 2027 and 2028 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 metric ton)**

| Rockfish Primary Species | TAC | ICA | TAC minus ICA | Initial allocation to entry-level longline fishery[1] | Allocation to Rockfish Program cooperatives[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 |

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

[2] *Rockfish cooperatives include vessels in CV and C/P cooperatives (50 CFR 679.81).*

Section 679.81(c) and table 28c to 50 CFR part 679 require allocations of rockfish secondary species to Rockfish Program CV and C/P cooperatives in the Central GOA. CV cooperatives receive allocations of Pacific cod, sablefish from the trawl gear allocation, and thornyhead rockfish. C/P cooperatives receive allocations of sablefish from the trawl gear allocation, rougheye and blackspotted rockfish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish. Table 9 lists the allocations of the proposed 2027 and 2028 TACs of rockfish secondary species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P cooperatives.

**Table 9–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P Cooperatives in the Rockfish Program (Values are in metric tons)**

| Rockfish secondary species | Central GOA annual TAC | CV cooperatives percentage of TAC | CV cooperatives allocation (mt) | C/P cooperatives percentage of TAC | C/P cooperatives allocation (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 |

*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 groundfish 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. In 2026, the commercial fishery for DSR was closed due to concerns about declining DSR biomass.

NMFS, after consultation with the Council, proposes to exempt pot gear, jig gear, and the sablefish IFQ fixed gear fishery categories from the non-trawl halibut PSC limit for 2027 and 2028. NMFS agrees with these recommendations from the Council for 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 halibut they catch while fishing sablefish IFQ.

The best available information on estimated halibut bycatch consists of data collected by fisheries observers during 2026. The estimated halibut bycatch mortality through October 8, 2026, is 524 mt for trawl gear and 74 mt for hook-and-line gear for a total halibut mortality of 598 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.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(i) and (ii) authorizes NMFS to seasonally apportion the halibut PSC limits after consultation with the Council. The FMP and regulations require 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 PSC limits on segments of the target groundfish industry. Based on public comment, information presented in the 2024 SAFE report, NMFS catch data, State catch data, and International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) stock assessment and mortality data, the Council may recommend to NMFS, or NMFS may make, changes to the seasonal, gear-type, or fishery category apportionments of halibut PSC limits in the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications pursuant to § 679.21(d)(1) and (d)(4).

The final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications (91 FR 11902) list the Council's recommendations and NMFS's approved seasonal apportionments based on these FMP and regulatory considerations with respect to halibut PSC limits. The seasonal apportionments for these proposed 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications are unchanged from the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications. Table 10 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 Pacific halibut PSC limits, allowances, and apportionments. The halibut PSC limits in tables 10, 11, and 12 reflect the halibut PSC limits set forth at § 679.21(d)(2) and (3). Section 679.21(d)(4)(iii) and (iv) specifies that any underages 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 10–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Pacific Halibut PSC Limits, Allowances, and Apportionments (Values are in metric tons)**

| 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**: Area apportionments and seasonal allowances may not total precisely due to rounding.

[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. The Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, that the fixed gear sablefish IFQ fishery, and the pot and jig gear groundfish fisheries, be exempt 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 a fishing year and optimization of the total amount of groundfish harvest under the halibut PSC limit. The fishery categories for the trawl halibut PSC limits are (1) a deep-water species fishery composed of sablefish, rockfish, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, and arrowtooth flounder; and (2) a shallow-water species fishery composed of pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates, and "other species" (*i.e.*, sharks and octopuses) (§ 679.21(d)(3)(iii)). Halibut mortality incurred while directed fishing for skates with trawl gear accrues towards the shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC limit (69 FR 26320, May 12, 2004).

NMFS will combine available trawl halibut PSC limit apportionments in part of the second season deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries for use in either fishery 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 approach provides the trawl gear deep-water and shallow-water species 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 11 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 seasonal apportionments of trawl halibut PSC limits between the trawl gear deep-water and the shallow-water species fisheries.

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

and C/P halibut PSC limit allocation of 191 mt to the Rockfish Program, 149 mt remains for the trawl deep-water species fishery's halibut PSC third seasonal apportionment.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(B) limits the amount of the halibut PSC limit 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 11–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Seasonal Apportionment of the Pacific Halibut PSC Limits Between the Trawl Gear Shallow-Water and Deep-Water Species Fishery Categories (Values are in metric tons)**

| Season | Shallow-water | Deep-water | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| January 20 - April 1 | 385 | 135 | 520 |
| April 1 - July 1 | 85 | 256 | 341 |
| July 1 - August 1[1] | 120 | 149 | 460 |
| Rockfish Program limit (April 1-November 1)[1] | 191 | | |
| August 1 - October 1 | 53 | 75 | 128 |
| October 1 - December 31[2] | n/a | n/a | 256 |
| Total | n/a | n/a | 1,705 |

[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 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 C/Ps in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) in conjunction with these harvest specifications. A comprehensive

description and example of the calculations necessary to apportion the other hook-and-line fishery halibut PSC limit between the hook-and-line CV and C/P sectors were included in the proposed rule to implement amendment 83 to the FMP (76 FR 44700, July 26, 2011) and are not repeated here.

Pursuant to § 679.21(d)(2)(iii), the halibut PSC limit for the other hook-and-line fishery is apportioned between the CV and C/P sectors in proportion to the total Western and Central GOA Pacific cod allocations, which vary annually based on the proportion of the Pacific cod biomass between the Western, Central, and Eastern GOA. Pacific cod is apportioned among these three management areas based on the percentage of overall biomass per management area as calculated in the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment. Information in the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment describes this distributional calculation, which spatially apportions ABC (*i.e.*, as BRDs) among GOA regulatory areas on the basis of the three most recent stock surveys. For 2027 and 2028, the proposed distribution of the total GOA Pacific cod ABC is 27.1 percent to the Western GOA, 63.8 percent to the Central GOA, and 9.1 percent to the Eastern GOA. Therefore, the calculations made in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) incorporate the most recent information on GOA Pacific cod distribution and allocations with respect to the proposed annual halibut PSC limits for the CV and C/P hook-and-line sectors of the other hook-and-line fishery. The calculations for the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications will use updated information on the distribution of Pacific cod from the Pacific cod stock assessment in the final 2026 SAFE report. Additionally, the annual halibut PSC limits for both the CV and C/P sectors of the other hook-and-line fishery are proposed to be divided into three seasonal apportionments, using seasonal percentages of 86 percent, 2 percent, and 12 percent, consistent with § 679.21(d)(4).

For 2027 and 2028, NMFS proposes annual halibut PSC limits of 163 mt and 92 mt to the hook-and-line CV and hook-and-line C/P sectors, respectively. Table 12 lists

the proposed 2027 and 2028 apportionments of halibut PSC limits between the hook-and-line CV and the hook-and-line C/P sectors of the other hook-and-line fishery.

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

**Table 12–Proposed 2027 and 2028 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 metric tons)**

| 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 |

*Halibut Discard Mortality Rates*

To monitor halibut PSC limits, allowances, and seasonal 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 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 bycatch 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 working group's recommendations for 2027 and 2028 are available at *https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/5140* (linked under the Halibut DMRs agenda item). 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. In 2026, the working group updated recommendations and combined the Rockfish Program non-pelagic trawl CV group with the non-pelagic trawl CV group due to a limited number of halibut assessments collected in 2025 and across the broader timeframe (2022-2025). 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.

The Plan Team reviewed the DMRs in September 2026, and the SSC, AP, and Council reviewed the DMRs in October 2026. The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council concurred with the continued use of the DMR estimation methodology to calculate DMRs for 2027 and 2028. NMFS proposes DMRs derived from the DMR estimation methodology and reviewed and recommended by the Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council for the proposed 2027 and 2028 DMRs, which use either 2- or 4-year averages as described above. Table 13 lists these proposed 2027 and 2028 DMRs.

**Table 13–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Halibut Discard Mortality Rates for Vessels Fishing in the Gulf of Alaska (Values are percent of halibut assumed to be dead)**

| Gear | Sector | Halibut discard mortality rate |
|---|---|---|
| Pelagic trawl | CV | 1.00 |
| Pelagic trawl | C/P | 1.00 |
| Non-pelagic trawl | CV | 0.50 |
| Non-pelagic trawl | Mothership and C/P | 0.86 |
| Hook-and-line | C/P | 0.08 |
| Hook-and-line | CV | 0.15 |
| Pot | CV and C/P | 0.36 |

*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. NMFS will monitor the Chinook salmon PSC in the trawl pollock directed fishery and 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) establish 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 C/Ps; (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 C/Ps 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 a sector limits its use of Chinook salmon PSC to a certain threshold amount through the end of the calendar year (3,120 for trawl C/Ps 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 C/Ps and 3,060 for non-Rockfish Program trawl CVs) (§ 679.21(h)(4)). NMFS will evaluate the annual Chinook salmon PSC by trawl C/Ps and non-Rockfish Program trawl CVs when the 2026 fishing year is complete to determine whether to increase the Chinook salmon PSC limits for these two sectors in 2027. Based on preliminary 2026 Chinook salmon PSC data, the trawl C/P sector may receive an increase from 3,600 to 4,080 for the Chinook salmon PSC limit in 2027, and the non-Rockfish Program trawl CV sector may receive an increase from 2,700 to 3,060 for the Chinook salmon PSC limit in 2027. NMFS will specify the 2028 PSC limits for the trawl C/P 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 2027 calendar year (§ 679.21(h)(4)).

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

Section 679.64 establishes groundfish harvesting and processing sideboard limits on AFA C/Ps and CVs in the GOA. These sideboard limits are necessary to protect the interests of fishermen and processors who do not directly benefit from the AFA as compared to those fishermen and processors who receive exclusive harvesting and processing privileges under the AFA. Section 679.7(k)(1)(ii) prohibits listed AFA C/Ps and C/Ps designated on a listed AFA C/P permit from harvesting any species of fish in the GOA. Additionally, § 679.7(k)(1)(iv) prohibits listed AFA C/Ps and C/Ps designated on a listed AFA C/P 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 (BSAI) 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 and 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 stocks and stock complexes 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.

Table 14 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 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.

**Table 14–Proposed 2027 and 2028 GOA Non-Exempt American Fisheries Act CV Groundfish Sideboard Limits (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| Species | Seasonal apportionments | Area | Ratio of 2009-2019 non-exempt AFA CV retained catch to 2009-2019 TAC | Proposed TACs | Proposed 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 | 3,312 | 30 |
| | | C | 0.011 | 10,691 | 118 |
| | B Season: September 1-November 1 | W | 0.009 | 1,880 | 17 |
| | | C | 0.011 | 6,027 | 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 |

*Non-Exempt AFA CV Halibut PSC Limit*

Pursuant to § 679.64(b)(4)(ii)), the non-exempt AFA CVs and the associated LLP licenses PSC limit for halibut in the GOA is an annual amount based on a static ratio of 0.072, derived from the aggregate retained groundfish catch by non-exempt AFA CVs in each PSC target category from 2009 through 2019. Table 15 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC sideboard limits for vessels using trawl gear in the GOA.

**Table 15–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Non-Exempt American Fisheries Act CV Halibut PSC Sideboard Limits**

| Ratio (percent) | Annual trawl gear halibut PSC limit (mt) | Annual non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC limit (mt) |
|---|---|---|
| 0.072 | 1,705 | 123 |

*Non-AFA Crab Vessel Groundfish Harvest 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 harvest 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 landings 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 harvest 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 BSAI 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.

Table 16 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 groundfish sideboard limits 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 16–Proposed 2027 and 2028 GOA Non-American Fisheries Act Crab Vessel Groundfish Sideboard Limits (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| Species | Season | Sector | Ratio of 1996-2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996-2000 total harvest | Proposed TACs | Proposed non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pacific cod | A Season: January 1-June 10 | Western GOA Pot CV | 0.0997 | 3,312 | 330 |
| | | Central GOA Pot CV | 0.0474 | 10,691 | 507 |
| | B Season: September 1-December 31 | Western GOA Pot CV | 0.0997 | 1,880 | 188 |
| | | Central GOA Pot CV | 0.0474 | 6,027 | 286 |

*Rockfish Program Groundfish Sideboard and Halibut PSC Limitations*

The Rockfish Program establishes three classes of sideboard provisions: (1) CV groundfish sideboard restrictions; (2) C/P rockfish sideboard restrictions; and (3) C/P 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 Western GOA and WYK District 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)).

C/Ps participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives are restricted by rockfish and halibut PSC sideboard limits. These C/Ps are prohibited from directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the Western GOA and WYK District 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 C/Ps in the directed fishery for dusky rockfish and Pacific ocean perch (§ 679.82(e)(4)). These percentages are confidential; however, the method for determining percentages is described in § 679.82(e)(3). Holders of C/P-designated LLP licenses that opt out of participating in a Rockfish Program cooperative will be able to access that portion of each rockfish sideboard limits that is not assigned to Rockfish Program cooperatives (§ 679.82(e)(7)).

Under the Rockfish Program, the C/P sector is subject to halibut PSC sideboard limits for the trawl deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(e)(3) and (e)(5)). Halibut PSC sideboard ratios by fishery are set forth in § 679.82(e)(5). No halibut PSC sideboard limits apply to the CV sector, as CVs participating in a Rockfish Program cooperative receive a portion of the annual halibut PSC limit. C/Ps that opt out of the Rockfish Program would be able to access that portion of the deep-water and shallow-water halibut PSC sideboard limit not assigned to C/P rockfish cooperatives. The sideboard provisions for C/Ps that elect to opt out of participating in a rockfish cooperative are described in § 679.82(c), (e), and (f). Sideboard limits are linked to the catch history of specific vessels; however, some of

these vessels may choose to opt out of the Rockfish Program. Rockfish Program cooperative applications are not due to NMFS until March 1 of each calendar year; therefore, NMFS cannot calculate 2027 and 2028 opt-out sideboard limits in conjunction with these proposed harvest specifications. After March 1, NMFS will determine which C/Ps have opted out of the Rockfish Program in 2027 and will know the ratios and amounts used to calculate opt-out sideboard ratios. NMFS will then calculate any applicable opt-out sideboard limits for 2027 and announce the opt-out sideboard limits after March 1 in the **Federal Register**. Table 17 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 Rockfish Program halibut PSC sideboard limits for the C/P sector.

**Table 17–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Rockfish Program Halibut PSC Sideboard Limits for the C/P Sector (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| 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 |

*Amendment 80 Program Groundfish and PSC Sideboard Limits*

Amendment 80 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the BSAI Management Area (Amendment 80 Program) established a limited access privilege program for the non-AFA trawl C/P sector. The Amendment 80 Program established groundfish and halibut PSC 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(b) establishes groundfish harvesting sideboard limits on all Amendment 80 Program vessels to amounts no greater than the limits shown in Table 37 to 50 CFR part 679. The Amendment 80 Program vessel the F/V Defender (a replacement vessel for the F/V Golden Fleece that is less than or equal to 124 ft LOA) 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). Table 18 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 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.

**Table 18–Proposed 2027 and 2028 GOA Groundfish Sideboard Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| Species | Season | Area | Ratio of Amendment 80 sector vessels 1998 - 2004 catch to TAC | Proposed TACs | Proposed Amendment 80 vessel sideboard limits |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 | 0.020 | 3,312 | 66 |
| | A Season: January 20-June 10 | C | 0.044 | 10,691 | 470 |
| | B Season: September 1-November 1 | W | 0.020 | 1,880 | 38 |
| | B Season: September 1-November 1 | C | 0.044 | 6,027 | 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 | 1.000 | 1,346 | 1,346 |
| Dusky rockfish | Annual | W | 0.764 | 199 | 152 |
| | Annual | WYK | 0.896 | 204 | 183 |

The halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels in the GOA are based on the historical 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 historical use to accommodate two factors: (1) allocation of halibut PSC cooperative quota under the Rockfish Program and (2) the exemption of the F/V Golden Fleece or its replacement vessel if less than or equal to 124 ft LOA from this restriction (§ 679.92(b)(2)). Table 19 lists the proposed 2027 and 2028 halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels. This table incorporates 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 halibut PSC sideboard limit may carry forward to the next season limit (§ 679.92(b)(2)).

**Table 19–Proposed 2027 and 2028 Halibut PSC Sideboard Limits for Amendment 80 Program Vessels in the GOA (Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton)**

| Season | Season dates | Target fishery | Historic Amendment 80 use of the annual halibut PSC limit catch (ratio) | Annual trawl gear halibut PSC limit (mt) | Proposed Amendment 80 vessel halibut PSC limit (mt) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |

**Classification**

NMFS is issuing this proposed 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 under section 305(d) (see 50 CFR parts 679 and 680). The NMFS Assistant Administrator has preliminarily determined that the proposed harvest specifications are consistent with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable laws, subject to further review and consideration after public comment.

**Executive Order 13175**

Prior to the October 2026 Council meeting, NMFS invited Alaska Native Tribal governments to participate in consultation or engagement in order to provide for meaningful and timely consultation or engagement in the development of this action. NMFS received no responses or requests for consultation or engagement.

**Executive Order 12866**

This action is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866 because it only implements annual catch limits in the GOA.

**National Environmental Policy Act**

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 , as amended, 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). 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 and as documented in the ROD, NMFS concluded that the preferred alternative (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 GOA 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 and ecosystem impacts, while also facilitating continued harvests of GOA 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.

A SIR is being prepared for the final 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications to address the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS. Copies of the Final EIS, ROD, and annual SIRs are available from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**).

**Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis**

This Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) was prepared for this proposed rule, as required by Section 603 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) (5 U.S.C. 603), to describe the economic impact that this proposed rule, if adopted, would have on small entities. The IRFA describes: (1) the action; (2) the reasons why this proposed rule is proposed; (3) the objectives and legal basis for this proposed rule; (4) the estimated number and description of directly regulated small entities to which this proposed rule would apply; (5) the recordkeeping, reporting, and other compliance requirements of this proposed rule; and (6) the relevant Federal rules that may duplicate, overlap, or conflict with this proposed rule. The IRFA also describes significant alternatives to this proposed rule that would accomplish the stated objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and any other applicable statutes, and that would minimize any significant economic impact of this proposed rule on small entities. The description of the proposed action, its purpose, and the legal basis are explained earlier in the preamble and are not repeated here.

For RFA purposes only, NMFS has established a small business size standard for businesses, including their affiliates, whose primary industry is commercial fishing (50 CFR 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. A shoreside processor primarily involved in seafood processing (NAICS code 311710) 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 employment, counting all individuals employed on a full-time, part-time, or other basis, not in excess of 750 employees for all its affiliated operations worldwide.

**Number and Description of Small Entities Regulated by This Proposed Rule**

The entities directly regulated by the groundfish harvest specifications include: (1) entities operating vessels with groundfish Federal fisheries permits (FFPs) catching FMP groundfish in Federal waters (including those receiving direction allocations of groundfish); (2) all entities operating vessels, regardless of whether they hold groundfish FFPs, catching FMP groundfish in the State-waters parallel fisheries; and (3) all entities operating vessels fishing for halibut that have catch of FMP groundfish (whether or not they have FFPs). These include entities operating CVs and C/Ps within the action area and entities receiving direct allocations of groundfish.

In 2025 (the most recent year of complete data), there were 610 individual CVs and C/Ps with gross revenues less than or equal to $11 million. This represents the potential suite of directly regulated small entities. This includes an estimated 608 small CV and 2 small C/P entities 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 610 CVs and C/Ps 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 $420,000, $830,000, and $2,060,000; and respectively. Average gross revenues for hook-and-line C/Ps and pot gear C/Ps are confidential, and trawl gear C/Ps fall outside of the small entity maximum.

**Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Other Compliance Requirements and Relevant Federal Rules That May Duplicate, Overlap, or Conflict With This Proposed Rule**

This action would not impose recordkeeping and reporting requirements. This action would set 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 and 50 CFR part 680. 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**

The action under consideration is the proposed 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications, apportionments, and Pacific halibut PSC limits for the groundfish fisheries of the GOA. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for groundfish during the 2027 and 2028 fishing years and is taken in accordance with the FMP prepared and recommended by the Council and approved by NMFS pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The establishment of the proposed harvest specifications is governed by the Council and NMFS's harvest strategy for the catch of groundfish in the GOA. This strategy was previously selected from among five alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS, with the preferred alternative harvest strategy being one in which the TACs fall within the range

of ABCs recommended by the SSC through the harvest specifications process. Under the preferred harvest strategy, TACs are set to a level that falls within the range of ABCs recommended by the SSC through the harvest specification process and the sum of the TACs 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.

The proposed TACs associated with the preferred harvest strategy are those recommended by the Council in October 2026. OFLs and ABCs for the species were based on recommendations prepared by the Council's Plan Team in September 2026 and reviewed by the Council's SSC in October 2026. The Council based its TAC recommendations on those of its AP, which were consistent with the SSC's recommendations for OFL, ABC, and BRDs (formerly termed subarea apportionments of ABC). The TACs in these proposed 2027 and 2028 harvest specifications are unchanged from the 2026 TACs in the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications (91 FR 11902), and the sum of all TACs remains within the OY range for the GOA consistent with § 679.20(a)(1)(i)(B).

The proposed 2027 and 2028 OFLs and ABCs are based on the best biological information available, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised technical methods to calculate stock biomass. The proposed 2027 and 2028 TACs are based on the best biological and socioeconomic information available. The proposed 2027 and 2028 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report, the 2025 Pacific cod stock assessment, and the 2025 harvest projection for the deep-water flatfish stock complex, and other updated relevant information.

Under this action, the proposed ABCs reflect harvest amounts that are less than the specified OFLs. The proposed TACs are within the range of proposed ABCs

recommended by the SSC and do not exceed the biological limits recommended by the SSC (*i.e.*, the ABCs and OFLs). For most stocks and stock complexes in the GOA, the Council recommended, and NMFS proposes, TAC equal to ABC, or, for subareas, subarea TACs equal to BRDs, which is intended to maximize harvest opportunities in the GOA.

NMFS proposes TACs that are less than the proposed ABCs and BRDs in alignment with recommendations from the Council for the following stocks and stock complexes: 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 proposed 2027 and 2028 TACs. Setting TACs equal to ABCs (or, for some subareas, setting subarea TACs equal to BRDs) for some species may not result in increased harvest opportunities for those species for a variety of reasons. There may be a lack of commercial or market interest in some species. The shallow-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, and flathead sole TACs in the Western GOA are set to conserve the halibut PSC limit for use in other fisheries, including other groundfish fisheries. The other rockfish TAC in the SEO District is set to reduce discards of species in that stock complex. Atka mackerel is closed to directed fishing, and the TAC is set less than the ABC to account for incidental catch amounts 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 GHLs so that the ABCs are not exceeded.

Based upon the best scientific data available, and in consideration of the objectives for this action, NMFS has preliminarily determined that there are no significant alternatives to the proposed 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 proposed rule on small entities. This action is economically beneficial to entities operating in the GOA, including small entities. The action proposes TACs for commercially valuable species in the GOA and allows for the continued prosecution of the fishery, thereby creating the opportunity for fishery revenue. The proposed TACs were reviewed by participants in the fishing industry, including the AP and the public, and were recommended by the Council to NMFS after public review and comment during the October Council meeting. After public process, during which the Council solicited input from stakeholders, the Council recommended, and NMFS agrees, that the proposed harvest specifications would best accomplish the stated objectives articulated in the preamble for this proposed 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 proposed 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 and conference 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 or endangered or threatened species resulting from fishing activities conducted under these harvest specifications are discussed in the Final EIS and the annual SIRs and in consultations on the GOA groundfish fisheries (see **ADDRESSES**). Through a separate action, NMFS has issued a

valid MMPA section 101(a)(5)(E) permit for the incidental 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 (AK Gulf of Alaska sablefish longline) (89 FR 50270, June 13, 2024).

**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.

Dated: November 25, 2026.

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