

approved information collection that contains four components necessary for NMFS to manage the Western Alaska Community Development Quota Program (CDQ Program).

NMFS and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council manage the groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone off Alaska under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands are managed under the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area.

The CDQ Program is an economic development program authorized under the Magnuson-Stevens Act to provide eligible western Alaska villages with the opportunity to participate and invest in fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area, to support economic development in western Alaska, to alleviate poverty and provide economic and social benefits for residents of western Alaska, and to achieve sustainable and diversified local economies in western Alaska.

This information collection is used by NMFS to manage the small vessel CDQ fisheries, transfer quota among the CDQ groups, and authorize the use of alternative harvest regulations under certain circumstances.

This information collection contains the following four components:

- The CDQ Vessel Registration System is an online system used by the CDQ groups to add small hook-and-line catcher vessels to the CDQ vessel registration list. Registered vessels are exempt from the requirements to obtain and carry a License Limitation Program license under regulations at 50 part 679. This system is also used to remove vessels from the CDQ vessel registration list.

- The Groundfish/Halibut CDQ and Prohibited Species Quota (PSQ) Transfer Request form is used to transfer annual amounts of groundfish and halibut CDQ and PSQ, except Bering Sea Chinook salmon, between two CDQ groups. This form is completed by the transferring and receiving CDQ groups.

- The Application for Approval of Use of Non-CDQ Harvest Regulations is used by a CDQ group, an association representing CDQ groups, or a voluntary fishing cooperative to request approval to use non-CDQ harvest regulations when the CDQ regulations are more restrictive than the regulations otherwise required for participants in non-CDQ groundfish fisheries.

- An appeals process is provided for an applicant who receives an adverse initial administrative determination related to its Application for Approval of Use of Non-CDQ Harvest Regulations.

II. Method of Collection

The information is collected by mail, fax, delivery, email, and electronically through eFISH. The applications are available as fillable PDFs on the NMFS Alaska Region website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/alaska-community-development-quota-cdq-program-applications-and-forms>.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648–0269.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular submission [extension of a current information collection].

Affected Public: Not-for-profit institutions; Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 6.

Estimated Time per Response: CDQ Vessel Registration System, 10 minutes; Groundfish/Halibut CDQ and PSQ Transfer Request, 30 minutes; Application for Approval of Use of Non-CDQ Harvest Regulations, 5 hours; Appeals, 4 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 36.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$0 in recordkeeping and reporting costs.

Respondent's Obligation: Required to Obtain or Retain Benefits.

Legal Authority: Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

IV. Request for Comments

We are soliciting public comments to permit the Department/Bureau to: (a) Evaluate whether the proposed information collection is necessary for the proper functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the time and cost burden for this proposed collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) Evaluate ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) Minimize the reporting burden on those who are to respond, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. We will include or summarize each comment in our request to OMB to approve this information collection request. Before including

your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Sheleen Dumas,

Departmental PRA Compliance Officer, Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, Commerce Department.

[FR Doc. 2026–05110 Filed 3–13–26; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648–XF604]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permits

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, has made a preliminary determination that an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application contains all of the required information and warrants further consideration. The EFP would allow federally permitted fishing vessels to fish outside fishery regulations in support of exempted fishing activities proposed by the Northeast Seafood Coalition, in partnership with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF). Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on applications for proposed EFPs.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before March 31, 2026.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by email: nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line “Targeted Inshore Cod Protection Closure Spawning Evaluation 2026.” All comments received are a part of the public record and may be posted for public viewing 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 “anonymous” as the

signature if you wish to remain anonymous).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christine Ford, Fishery Management Specialist, *christine.ford@noaa.gov*, 978–281–9185.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The applicant submitted a complete application for an EFP to conduct commercial fishing activities that the regulations would otherwise restrict. This EFP would exempt the participating vessels from the following Federal regulations:

TABLE 1—REQUESTED EXEMPTIONS

CFR citation	Regulation	Need for exemption
50 CFR 648.81(d)(1) insofar as it applies to 50 CFR 648.81(d)(4)(i), (ii), and (iii).	Restrictions on fishing for NE multispecies, or having fishing gear capable of catching NE multispecies, on board a vessel in Gulf of Maine (GOM) Cod Protection Closure Areas I, II, and III.	To collect data on the presence/absence of spawning cod in targeted areas of GOM Cod Protection Closure Areas I, II, and III.
50 CFR 648.83	Restriction on retention of cod under the minimum fish size of 19 inches (48.3 cm).	To collect sex and maturity data of all cod, including sublegal sized cod, caught in targeted areas of GOM Cod Protection Closure Areas I, II, and III.

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

Project title	Exploration of targeted commercial groundfish sector access to inshore cod protection closures to better optimize overall yield of other allocated groundfish stocks and provide cod spawning information for the New England Fishery Management Council’s (NEFMC) Phase 2 of the Atlantic Cod Transition Plan.
Project start	05/01/2026.
Project end	11/30/2026.
Project objectives	To generate data to evaluate Western Gulf of Maine cod spawning activity in spring seasonal groundfish closures, in support of the NEFMC priority to assess closures as part of Phase 2 of the Atlantic Cod Transition Plan. Assess ability of the groundfish fishing industry to harvest healthy groundfish stocks, without undermining groundfish conservation and management measures.
Project location	Statistical Areas 132, 133, and 124.
Number of vessels	14.
Number of trips	Up to 178.
Trip duration (days)	1.
Total number of days	Up to 178.
Gear type(s)	Bottom trawl.
Number of tows or sets	Up to 4 per trip.
Duration of tows or sets	Up to 4 hours.

TABLE 3—CATCH COMPOSITION ESTIMATES

[Based on Sector II and XII; May, June, November 2024]

Species	Retained (live weight; pound (lb) /kilogram (kg))	Discarded (lb/kg)
Atlantic cod	26,277/11,919	726/329
Winter flounder	29,544/13,401	1,871/849
Haddock	49,228/22,329	2,410/1,093
White hake	1,283/582	160/73
American plaice	76,155/34,543	8,260/3,747
Pollock	518/235	212/96
Redfish	5,349/2,426	2,059/934
Witch flounder	27,121/12,302	926/420
Yellowtail flounder	131,222/59,521	18,003/8,166

Project Narrative

The purpose of this project is to continue to support industry access to healthy groundfish stocks, while evaluating the utility of seasonal cod protection closure areas, and collecting biological samples of cod. Under the 2025 EFP (#25006), a system was established to increase access to available groundfish stocks without

jeopardizing cod spawning aggregations. On May 13, 2025, three vessels fished under the EFP, completing four total tows. Although the EFP was only in effect for 1 day of fishing, the outcome reflected the effectiveness of real-time monitoring and communication protocols, which triggered an immediate suspension of the EFP once the spawning cod threshold was reached in Area B. Fishing did not occur in Area

A due to the prevalence of fixed fishing gear. By incorporating targeted modifications informed by the 2025 EFP, the proposed EFP would provide modified access while maintaining strict monitoring and protection for spawning cod. Specific modifications would include, but not be limited to: (1) narrowing the footprint of Area A to foster cooperation with the lobster industry and allow the deployment of

bottom trawl gear; (2) altering the northern boundary of Area B and splitting Area B into two areas (B1 and B2) to reduce the risk of catching cod closer to Jeffrey's Ledge; and (3) adding an Area C, which would provide additional access at a different time of year and for vessels from other ports.

Under this EFP, participating fishermen would conduct tows in targeted areas within GOM Cod Protection Closures I, II, and III, where industry-based groundfish surveys previously demonstrated low spawning cod density compared to other portions of the closure (Attachment). Vessels would submit trip notification to the Pre-Trip Notification System as usual. Vessels would only be allowed in targeted areas if they have a Northeast Fisheries Observer or At-sea Monitor aboard, or participate in an approved electronic monitoring program for the trip. Tows conducted within the targeted areas would be restricted to remain inside the area for the entire tow; however, vessels could make tows both inside and outside the target area on the same trip. Upon departure for a trip, vessels would notify a MA DMF project coordinator about intent to fish in the target areas. Up to 80 total tows would be conducted in Area A; up to 48 total tows would be conducted in Areas B1 and B2 combined; and up to 50 total tows would be conducted in Area C.

During all trips under the EFP, cod of all sizes caught in each tow conducted within the target areas would be kept round (not gutted), and isolated in separate totes with sealed and zip-tied lids. Cod caught in tows conducted outside the target areas would be handled consistent with standard fishing practices. Upon returning from a trip, vessels would contact MA DMF to meet them to sample target area-caught cod for sex and maturity. Additional sampling would be conducted to support the Northeast Fisheries Science Center conversion factor study. All catch would be accounted for consistent with standard fishing activities and applicable Annual Catch Entitlement, and legal size catch would be sold.

If MA DMF detects spawning cod caught in tows within the target areas to be at or above proposed thresholds, participating vessels would no longer be authorized to fish under the EFP within that particular target area (each of the four target areas (A, B1, B2, and C) will be evaluated separately). MA DMF defines spawning cod as females with clear eggs or males with running milt (either expressed externally, or when the testes are cut through). The proposed thresholds are more than five spawning cod in one tow or more than

18 percent of tows within a 7-day consecutive fishing period containing any spawning cod. MA DMF would immediately notify participating sector managers and NMFS if a cod spawning threshold has been reached.

If approved, the applicant may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the year. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and have minimal impacts that do not change the scope or impact of the initially approved EFP request. Any fishing activity conducted outside the scope of the exempted fishing activity would be prohibited.

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

Dated: March 12, 2026.

David R. Blankinship,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2026-05069 Filed 3-13-26; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF589]

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Pacific Council) Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) and Highly Migratory Species Advisory Subpanel (HMSAS) will hold a joint webinar meeting that is open to the public.

DATES: The meeting will be held Friday, April 3, 2026, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Pacific Time, or until business for the day has been completed.

ADDRESSES: This meeting will be held online. Specific meeting information, including directions on how to join the meeting and system requirements, will be provided in the meeting announcement on the Pacific Council's website (see <https://www.pcouncil.org>). You may send an email to Mr. Hayden York (hayden.york@pcouncil.org) or contact him at (503) 820-2424 for technical assistance.

Council address: Pacific Fishery Management Council, 7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101, Portland, OR 97220-1384.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kerry Griffin, Staff Officer, Pacific Council; telephone: (503) 820-2409.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The primary purpose of this meeting is to consider topics on the Council's April meeting agenda. There are no HMS-specific agenda items. However, the HMSMT and HMSAS may discuss and potentially develop supplemental reports on Cross Fishery Management Plan agenda items H.1 (Special Project 1—Adaptive Management and Flexibility) and H.2 (Council and NMFS Workload—Capacity Alignment).

Although non-emergency issues not contained in the meeting agenda may be discussed, those issues may not be the subject of formal action during this meeting. Action will be restricted to those issues specifically listed in this document and any issues arising after publication of this document that require emergency action under section 305(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provided the public has been notified of the intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Special Accommodations

Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Mr. Hayden York (hayden.york@pcouncil.org; (503) 820-2424) at least 10 days prior to the meeting date.

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

Dated: March 12, 2026.

Rey Israel Marquez,

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2026-05093 Filed 3-13-26; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF584]

Pacific Fishery Management Council; Public Meeting

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

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Pacific Council) will convene an online meeting of its Ecosystem Workgroup (EWG), which is open to the public.

DATES: The online meeting will be held Friday, April 3, 2026, from 1 p.m. to 4