

discard, and fishing effort data collection would be completed using the Northeast Fisheries Science Center Fisheries Logbook Data Recording Software. No sub-legal fish will be sold.

The project would also provide 50 cod fin clips from inside the GOM Closed Area to expand the geographic range of an ongoing cod DNA study being conducted by Dr. Linas Kenter, New Hampshire Sea Grant. Samples would consist of a fingernail size fin clip from the top of the tail, presumably posing no threat to the survivability of the released cod. The project seeks to sample cod catch, including undersized cod.

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: April 8, 2026.

David R. Blankinship,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[0648-XF618]

Endangered and Threatened Species; Take of Anadromous Fish

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

ACTION: Notification; availability of a proposed evaluation and pending determination for public comment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that NMFS has received a Hatchery and Genetics Management Plan (HGMP) for seven hatchery programs rearing and releasing fall Chinook salmon, spring Chinook salmon, fall chum salmon, sockeye salmon, coho salmon and steelhead in the Skokomish River basin. The plan describes a hatchery program operated by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in collaboration with the Skokomish

Indian Tribe as co-managers, and Tacoma Power Utility. This document serves to notify the public of the availability and opportunity to comment on a Proposed Evaluation and Pending Determination Documents (PEPD) on implementing the proposed hatchery program and enforcing the associated HGMP, which concludes that it will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery nor modify or destroy critical habitat of Hood Canal-Strait of Juan de Fuca summer chum salmon, Puget Sound Chinook salmon, or Puget Sound steelhead. This notice was previously posted for public comment, but since the PEPD document was not available during the comment period, we are reopening the related documents for public comment with this notice.

DATES: Comments must be received no later than 5 p.m. Pacific time on May 13, 2026. Comments received after this date may not be considered.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2026-0925, by the following method:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Visit <https://www.regulations.gov> and type NOAA-NMFS-2026-0925 in the Search box. Click on the "Comment" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

Also:

- The HGMP is available online at: Hatchery production, HGMPs and the ESA | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/management/hatcheries/hgmp#comment>.

- The PEPD is available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/seven-hatchery-programs-skokomish-basin>

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, *etc.*), 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).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Chante Davis at (503)321-2307 or chante.davis@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Endangered Species Act (ESA)-Listed Species Covered in This Notice

- Hood Canal-Strait of Juan de Fuca summer chum salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*): threatened, naturally and artificially propagated;
- Puget Sound Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*): threatened, naturally and artificially propagated;
- Puget Sound Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*): threatened, naturally and artificially propagated.

Background

The term "take" is defined under the ESA to mean harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. The ESA prohibits the take of endangered salmonids and, pursuant to ESA section 4(d), ESA regulations can be extended to prohibit the take of threatened salmonids. However, NMFS may make exceptions to the take prohibitions for hatchery programs that are approved by NMFS under the limits on the prohibitions outlined in 50 CFR 223.203(b). The operators, WDFW collaborating with tribal co-manager Skokomish Indian Tribe, have submitted an HGMP to NMFS pursuant to NMFS' Limit 6 of the 4(d) Rule of the ESA for hatchery activities in the Skokomish River basin, Washington. The PEPD is NMFS' initial determination for how the HGMP addresses the criteria in 50 CFR 223.203(b)(5).

The hatchery program under review is designed to contribute to the reintroduction and recovery of Chinook salmon, sockeye salmon and steelhead in the Skokomish River basin. These fish contribute to the stability of Pacific salmon fish stocks in order to maintain sustainable U.S. fisheries and strengthen the national seafood supply chain. The hatchery programs are intended to contribute to fulfilling federal trust responsibilities toward Tribes with rights guaranteed through treaties, as affirmed in *United States v. Washington* (1974), by contributing to the recovery of ESA-listed salmon. Additionally, the programs are intended to contribute to the survival and recovery of Puget Sound Chinook Salmon and Puget Sound Steelhead, provide information on exploitation rates, and support returns of coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and sockeye salmon to the Skokomish River basin.

Classification

Under section 4 of the ESA, the Secretary of Commerce is required to

adopt such regulations as deemed necessary and advisable for the conservation of species listed as threatened. The ESA salmon and steelhead 4(d) rule regulations (50 CFR 223.203(b)) specifies categories of activities that contribute to the conservation of listed salmonids and sets out the criteria for such activities. The rule further provides that the prohibitions of paragraph (a) of the regulations do not apply to actions undertaken in compliance with a plan developed jointly by a state and a tribe and determined by NMFS to be in accordance with the salmon and steelhead 4(d) rule (65 FR 42422, July 10, 2000).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 742a *et seq.*

Dated: April 7, 2026.

Jennifer Leigh Quan,

Regional Administrator, West Coast Region, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF628]

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 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 April 28, 2026.

ADDRESSES: You may submit written comments by email: nmfs.gar.efp@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line “MA DMF 2026 Ventless Trap Survey”. 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: Elise Scholl, Fishery Management Specialist, elise.scholl@noaa.gov, 978-281-9189.

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 697.21(c)(1) and (2)	Gear specification requirements for Lobster Management Areas 1 and 2.	To allow for the use of traps without escape vents.
50 CFR 697.19(a) and (b)	Trap limit requirements for Areas 1 and 2	To allow for trap limits to be exceeded for up to 360 traps in Area 1 and 96 traps for Area 2.
50 CFR 697.19(j)	Trap tag requirements	To allow for alternatively tagged traps.
50 CFR 697.20(a)(2), 697.20(b)(2), 697.20(a)(3), and 697.20(b)(3).	Minimum and maximum carapace length requirements for Areas 1 and 2.	To allow sub-legal and over-sized lobsters to be landed for research purposes.
50 CFR 697.20(g)(1) and (3)	V-notch possession requirement for Areas 1 and 2.	To allow landing of female lobsters for research purposes.
50 CFR 697.20(d)(1) and (3)	Berried female possession requirements	To allow landing of egg-bearing female lobsters for research purposes.
50 CFR 697.20(h)(1)	Minimum carapace width requirements	To allow sub-legal Jonah crabs to be landed for research purposes.
50 CFR 697.20(h)(2)(i) and (ii)	Berried female possession requirement	To allow landing of egg-bearing female Jonah crabs for research purposes.

TABLE 2—PROJECT SUMMARY

Project title	2026 Ventless Trap Survey.
Project start	5/01/2026.
Project end	10/31/2026.
Project objectives	To provide fishery-independent data on lobster and Jonah crab growth and abundance within Massachusetts State waters.
Project location	Statistical Areas 514 and 538.
Number of vessels	5.
Number of trips	70.
Trip duration (days)	1.
Total number of days	70.
Gear type(s)	Lobster Traps.
Number of tows or sets	16 per trip.
Duration of tows or sets	3-day soak.