

Research that was first received by the Council in November 2025. At the November 2025 meeting, the Council requested that the Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) return in March with additional information regarding the gear configuration and species bycatch in other parts of the world where the gear type has been used. The March 2026 report from the HMSMT² provides bycatch data and other information from available studies on ring tackle in other parts of the world. The EFP applicant also attended the March meeting to answer questions from the Council.

The Council recommended that NMFS approve the EFP application and expressed support for testing the use of ring tackle in a variety of EFP gear configurations. The Council also recommended that NMFS prioritize flexibility in the operative terms and conditions of existing, approved, HMS EFPs, to build on lessons learned, and to support continued participation in fishery innovations (including consideration of more vessels), provided that such flexibilities can be accommodated within effort limits considered in the environmental review processes and analyses underpinning the issuance of EFPs for those configuration types.

If issued, the EFP would exempt the permitted vessels from the Commercial fishing gear definitions at 50 CFR 660.702, which specify that Deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) includes “gangions with hooks attached,” and from gear specifications at 50 CFR 660.715(b)(3), which require the use of circle hooks in DSBG. The EFP would allow use of monofilament rings as a substitute for one of the three hooks currently permitted on each vertical mainline of standard DSBG, and each section of linked DSBG. That is, the maximum of three pieces of terminal tackle per buoy would not be modified under this EFP, only the requirement that circle hooks must be used.

At this time, NMFS is requesting public comment on the ring tackle EFP application. NMFS will take the Council’s comments into consideration along with public comments on whether to issue this EFP. Aside from regulatory exemptions to conduct the proposed EFP activities, vessels fishing under an EFP would be subject to all other regulations implemented at 50 CFR part 660, subpart K and 50 CFR part 300, subpart C, including measures to protect sea turtles, marine mammals, sharks, and seabirds.

NMFS will consider all public comments submitted in response to this **Federal Register** notice prior to issuance

of any EFP. Additionally, NMFS will analyze the effects of issuing EFPs in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and NOAA’s Administrative Order 216–6A, as well as for compliance with other applicable laws, including section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), which requires the agency to consider whether the proposed action is likely to jeopardize the continued existence and recovery of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.

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

Dated: April 13, 2026.

Kelly Denit,

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

Endnotes

¹ <https://www.pccouncil.org/documents/2026/02/g-3-attachment-1-draft-efp-pier-hookless-gear.pdf/>.

² <https://www.pccouncil.org/documents/2026/03/g-3-a-supplemental-hmsmt-report-1-highly-migratory-species-management-team-report-on-exempted-fishing-permits-preliminary-or-final.pdf/>.

[FR Doc. 2026–07390 Filed 4–15–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Patent and Trademark Office

[Docket No. PTO–P–2021–0019]

Termination of the Fast-Track for COVID–19-Related Appeals Pilot Program

AGENCY: United States Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is terminating the Fast-Track for COVID–19-Related Appeals Pilot Program.

DATES: This notice serves as the formal termination of the Fast-Track for COVID–19-Related Appeals Pilot Program. Petitions to participate in the program filed after midnight ET on April 16, 2026, will not be granted.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Megan Carlson, Patent Trial and Appeal Board, by telephone at 571–272–9797, or by email at fasttrackappeals@uspto.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In 2021, the USPTO published a notice implementing the Fast-Track for COVID–19-Related Appeals Pilot Program. *See Fast-Track Pilot Program for Appeals Related to COVID–19*, 86 FR

19877 (April 15, 2021) (2021 Notice). The 2021 Notice provided for the advancement of applications related to COVID–19 out of turn in *ex parte* appeals before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB). An appellant who filed an *ex parte* appeal of an application with claim(s) that covered a product or process related to COVID–19 (such product or process must be subject to an applicable U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for COVID–19 use) and received a notice that the appeal had been docketed could file a petition at no cost to expedite the review of his or her appeal without paying a petition fee.

Pursuant to this notice, the USPTO is now formally terminating the Fast-Track for COVID–19-Related Appeals Pilot Program. Terminating the program allows the USPTO to dedicate resources to other priorities, such as reducing pendency in *ex parte* appeals across all technology areas. Notwithstanding, the program was not widely used, with only one petition having been granted. This action is consistent with the 2021 Notice, in which the USPTO reserved the discretion to terminate the program depending on factors such as workload and resources needed to administer the program, feedback from the public, and the effectiveness of the program. *See* 86 FR 19877 at 19878.

Any petition to participate in the Fast-Track for COVID–19-Related Appeals Pilot Program filed after midnight ET on April 16, 2026, will not be granted.

At that time, the USPTO will remove petition form PTO/SB/454, titled “Petition Fast-Track for COVID–19-Related Appeals Pilot Program” from the USPTO’s website. Applicants should not submit stored copies of form PTO/SB/454.

The USPTO will continue to process petitions for the Fast-Track for COVID–19-Related Appeals Pilot Program filed by midnight ET on April 16, 2026, as set forth in the “Conduct of Fast-Track Pilot Program for Appeals Related to COVID–19” section of the 2021 Notice. *See* 86 FR at 19878. *Ex parte* appeals accorded fast-track status due to the filing of a grantable petition by midnight ET on April 16, 2026, will not lose that status merely because the appeal is still pending after that deadline. Any such appeal will retain fast-track status until the PTAB’s jurisdiction ends under 37 CFR 41.35(b).

Patent applicants interested in expediting an *ex parte* appeal before the PTAB may instead request fast-track status under the Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program, which provides for the advancement of applications out of turn in *ex parte* appeals before the PTAB. An

appellant who has filed an *ex parte* appeal and received a notice that the appeal has been docketed may file a petition, accompanied by a petition fee, to expedite the review of his or her appeal. The Fast-Track Appeals Pilot Program sets a target of reaching a decision on the *ex parte* appeal within six months from the date an appeal is entered into that program.

John A. Squires,

Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

[FR Doc. 2026-07442 Filed 4-15-26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-16-P

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List; Additions and Deletions

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Deletions from the Procurement List.

SUMMARY: This action deletes product(s) from the Procurement List that were furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

DATES: Date added to and deleted from the Procurement List: May 16, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, 355 E Street SW, Suite 325, Washington, DC 20024.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information or to submit comments contact: Michael R. Jurkowski, Telephone: (703) 489-1322, or email CMTEFedReg@AbilityOne.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Deletion

On March 12, 2026 (91 FR 12172), the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled published notice of proposed deletions from the Procurement List. This notice is published pursuant to 41 U.S.C. 8503(a)(2) and 41 CFR 51-2.3.

After consideration of the relevant matter presented, the Committee has determined that the product(s) listed below are no longer suitable for procurement by the Federal Government under 41 U.S.C. 8501-8506 and 41 CFR 51-2.4.

Regulatory Flexibility Act Certification

I certify that the following action will not have a significant impact on a

substantial number of small entities. The major factors considered for this certification were:

1. The action will not result in additional reporting, recordkeeping or other compliance requirements for small entities.

2. The action may result in authorizing small entities to furnish the product(s) to the Government.

3. There are no known regulatory alternatives which would accomplish the objectives of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (41 U.S.C. 8501-8506) in connection with the product(s) deleted from the Procurement List.

End of Certification

Accordingly, the following product(s) are deleted from the Procurement List:

Product(s)

NSN(s)—Product Name(s)

7520-01-620-3826—Hole Punch, Paper, High-capacity, 2-Hole, Adjustable, 30 sheet capacity, Black Base, Metallic Handle

Authorized Source of Supply: Access: Supports for Living Inc., Middletown, NY

Mandatory For: GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Contracting Activity: GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, GSA/FAS ADMIN SVCS ACQUISITION BR(2)

Michael R. Jurkowski,

Director, Business Operations.

[FR Doc. 2026-07363 Filed 4-15-26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6353-01-P

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List; Proposed Additions and Deletions

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Proposed additions to and deletions from the Procurement List.

SUMMARY: The Committee is proposing to add products and service(s) to the Procurement List that will be furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities and delete service(s) previously furnished by such agencies.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before: May 16, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, 355 E Street SW, Suite 325, Washington, DC 20024.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information or to submit comments contact: Michael R.

Jurkowski, Telephone: (703) 489-1322, or email CMTEFedReg@AbilityOne.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice is published pursuant to 41 U.S.C. 8503 (a)(2) and 41 CFR 51-2.3. Its purpose is to provide interested persons an opportunity to submit comments on the proposed actions.

Additions

In accordance with 41 CFR 51-2.4(b), Government personnel within the contracting activity have identified this as a product requirement not applicable to other Federal entities and has requested the Committee consider granting a purchase or distribution preference if the product is added to the Procurement List. See 71 FR 69536 (Dec. 1, 2006). If the Committee grants this request, the product listed will not be available through the U.S. AbilityOne Commission's Commercial Distribution Program. The Committee will consider this request along with relevant comments received from interested parties.

The following product(s) are proposed for addition to the Procurement List for production by the nonprofit agencies listed:

Product(s)

NSN(s)—Product Name(s)

6510-00-201-1755—Bandage, Cravat, Triangular

Authorized Source of Supply: Alphapointe, Kansas City, MO

Mandatory For: DEPT OF DEFENSE

Contracting Activity: DEPT OF DEFENSE, DLA TROOP SUPPORT

In accordance with 41 CFR 51-5.3(b), the Committee intends to add the service requirement listed below to the Procurement List as a mandatory purchase only for the contracting activity at the location listed with the proposed qualified nonprofit agency as the authorized source of supply. Prior to adding the service to the Procurement List, the Committee will consider other pertinent information, including information from Government personnel and relevant comments from interested parties regarding the Committee's intent to geographically limit this services requirement.

The following service(s) are proposed for addition to the Procurement List for delivery by the nonprofit agency listed:

Services(s)

Service Type: Navy HAZMAT San Diego

Mandatory for: US Navy, Naval Supply Systems Command, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA, 3350 Patterson Road, Naval Base Ventura County, Port Hueneme, CA

Mandatory for: US Navy, Naval Supply Systems Command, Fleet Logistics