

Additionally, this final rule could reduce the rebuilding time for the overfished gag stock if these limits reduce landings of gag. NMFS acknowledges the potential issues with implementing vessel limits on headboats, which normally carry more anglers on each trip than charter vessels. To potentially address this issue, the Council is developing Regulatory Amendment 39 under the Snapper-Grouper FMP that considers limits of snapper-grouper species, including gag and black grouper, on headboats with more than six anglers on a trip.

Classification

Pursuant to section 304(b)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this final rule is consistent with Regulatory Amendment 36, the Snapper-Grouper FMP, other provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law.

This final rule has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866. This final rule is not an Executive Order 14192 regulatory action.

NMFS has determined that this action would not have a substantial direct effect on one or more Indian Tribes, on the relationship between the Federal Government and Indian Tribes, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Indian Tribes; therefore, consultation with Tribal officials under Executive Order 13175 is not required, and the requirements of sections (5)(b) and (5)(c) of Executive Order 13175 also do not apply. A Tribal summary impact statement under sections (5)(b)(2)(B) and (c)(2) of Executive Order 13175 is not required and has not been prepared.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act provides the statutory basis for this final rule. No duplicative, overlapping, or conflicting Federal rules have been identified. A description of this final rule, why it is being implemented, and the purpose of this final rule are contained in the **SUMMARY and SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** sections of this final rule.

This final rule contains no information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

The Senior Lead Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration during the proposed rule stage that this action would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The factual basis for the certification

was published in the proposed rule and is not repeated here. No comments were received regarding this certification. As a result, a final regulatory flexibility analysis is not required and none was prepared.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 622

Commercial, Fisheries, Fishing, Recreational, Snapper-grouper, South Atlantic.

Dated: September 24, 2026.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, NMFS amends 50 CFR part 622 as follows:

PART 622—FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF AMERICA, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC

■ 1. The authority citation for part 622 continues to read as follows:

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

■ 2. Amend § 622.183 by:

- a. Revising paragraph (a)(1)(ii)(E);
- b. Adding paragraph (a)(1)(ii)(F);
- c. Revising paragraph (a)(2)(vii)(E); and
- d. Adding paragraph (a)(2)(vii)(F).

The revisions and additions read as follows:

§ 622.183 Area and seasonal closures.

- (a) * * *
- (1) * * *
- (ii) * * *

(E) A crustacean trap or golden crab trap cannot be baited. All buoys must be disconnected from the gear, although buoys may remain on deck.

(F) A sea bass pot cannot be baited. For a sea bass pot fished with a deployed vertical line or rope connected to a buoy, the buoy must be disconnected from the gear, although the buoy may remain on deck. For a sea bass pot fished without a deployed vertical line connected to a buoy, referred to as an on-demand or ropeless sea bass pot, the buoy may remain connected to the gear.

- (2) * * *
- (vii) * * *

(E) A crustacean trap or golden crab trap cannot be baited. All buoys must be disconnected from the gear, although buoys may remain on deck.

(F) A sea bass pot cannot be baited. For a sea bass pot fished with a deployed vertical line or rope connected to a buoy, the buoy must be disconnected from the gear, although the buoy may remain on deck. For a sea bass pot fished without a deployed

vertical line connected to a buoy, referred to as an on-demand or ropeless sea bass pot, the buoy may remain connected to the gear.

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■ 3. Amend § 622.187 by revising paragraph (b)(2)(i) to read as follows:

§ 622.187 Bag and possession limits.

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- (b) * * *
- (2) * * *

(i) No more than one fish may be a gag or a black grouper. However, the bag limit for gag and black grouper for the captain or crew of a vessel operating as a charter vessel or headboat is zero. In addition to the bag limits specified in this paragraph (b)(2)(i), the vessel limits in paragraphs (b)(2)(i)(A) and (B) of this section also apply to gag and black grouper. In the event of a conflict between a bag limit and vessel limit, the more restrictive limit will prevail.

(A) The vessel limit for gag and black grouper on a vessel operating as a private recreational vessel is two fish per day in any combination.

(B) The vessel limit for gag and black grouper on a vessel operating as a charter vessel or headboat is two fish per trip in any combination.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 260923–0007]

RIN 0648–BN25

Fisheries Off West Coast States; West Coast Salmon Fisheries; Rebuilding Plan for the Overfished Queets River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon Stock

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

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule will implement the rebuilding plan recommended by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) for the overfished Queets River Spring/Summer Chinook salmon stock (Queets sp/su Chinook salmon). This final rule identifies changes to the regulations to implement the rebuilding plan.

DATES: Effective October 28, 2026.

ADDRESSES: The documents cited in this document are available on the Pacific

Fishery Management Council's (Council) website (<https://www.pcouncil.org>) and the NMFS West Coast Region (WCR) website (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/rebuilding-plan-overfished-queets-river-spring-summer-chinook-salmon-stock>).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Shannon Penna, Fishery Management Specialist, at 562-980-4239 or Shannon.Penna@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

In October 2023, NMFS determined that the Queets sp/su Chinook salmon managed under the Council's Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP) met the overfished criteria of the FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). "Overfished" is defined in the FMP as when the 3-year geometric mean of a salmon stock's annual spawning escapements falls below the reference point defined as the minimum stock size threshold (MSST). The 3-year geometric mean spawning escapement for Queets sp/su Chinook salmon for the 2019–2021 period was 314, which is less than the stock's MSST of 350. In response to the overfished determination, the Council developed a rebuilding plan, which was transmitted to NMFS for approval and implementation. NMFS published a proposed rule (91 FR 7952, February 19, 2026) describing the rebuilding plan and soliciting comments from the public on the proposed rule and draft rebuilding plan. NMFS explained in the preamble to the proposed rule the basis for its proposal to implement the Council's recommended plan; that explanation is not repeated here.

Public Comment

NMFS solicited public comments on the proposed rule through March 23, 2026. NMFS received four public comments during the open comment

period. All comments addressed matters outside the scope of this specific rulemaking. The first three comments addressed concerns about offshore wind energy and the management of fisheries outside the scope of the MSA. The fourth comment is non-responsive to the proposed decision because it erroneously presumes NMFS proposed the total suspension of commercial fishing, a restrictive alternative that the Council considered but did not recommend and NMFS is not proposing. Therefore, these comments are not addressed in this final action, and no changes were made to the final rule in response to public comments.

Classification

Pursuant to section 304(b)(3) of the MSA, the NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this final rule is consistent with the Salmon FMP, other provisions of the MSA, and other applicable law.

This final rule has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866

This final rule is not an Executive Order 14192 regulatory action.

This action was developed after meaningful and timely consultation or engagement with Tribal officials on the Council and the Northwest Indian Fish Commission, who have agreed with the rebuilding plan. NMFS consulted with Tribal officials on the Council and the Northwest Indian Fish Commission after NMFS invited engagement on this rule. No changes were made in the final rule in response to tribal consultations.

The Senior Lead Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration during the proposed rule stage that this action would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The factual basis for the certification was published in the proposed rule and

is not repeated here. No comments were received regarding this certification. As a result, a regulatory flexibility analysis was not required and none was prepared.

This final rule contains no information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 660

Fisheries, Fishing, Recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

Dated: September 24, 2026.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out above and detailed in the proposed rule, NMFS amends 50 CFR part 660 as follows:

PART 660—FISHERIES OFF WEST COAST STATES

■ 1. The authority citation for part 660 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*, and 16 U.S.C. 7001 *et seq.*

■ 2. Amend § 660.413, by adding paragraph (b) to read as follows:

§ 660.413 Overfished species rebuilding plans.

* * * * *

(b) *Queets River Natural Spring/Summer Chinook.* The Queets River Natural Spring/Summer Chinook salmon stock was declared overfished in 2023. The rebuilding plan is to manage the fishery consistent with the FMP and this subsection. The stock will be considered rebuilt when the 3-year geometric mean of natural-area adult escapement meets or exceeds S_{MSY} (the default criterion in the Salmon FMP).

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