personal information provided. Please see the Privacy Act heading below.

Privacy Act: Anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of NHTSA's dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT's complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (65 FR 19477–78) or you may visit *https://www.transportation.gov/privacy.*

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or comments received, go to *http://www.regulations.gov* or the street address listed above. Follow the online instructions for accessing the dockets via the internet.

Confidential Business Information: If you claim that any of the information in your comment (including any additional documents or attachments) constitutes confidential business information within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4) or is protected from disclosure pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 1905, please see the detailed instructions given under the Public Participation heading of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this document.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For technical issues, you may contact Ms. Lina Valivullah, Office of Automation Safety; Telephone: 202–366–1810; Email: *Lina.Valivullah@dot.gov;* Facsimile: 202–493–2739 or Mr. Gerald Devries, Office of Crash Avoidance, Rulemaking; Telephone: 202–366–1810; Email: *Gerald.Devries@dot.gov;* Facsimile: 202–493–2739. For legal issues, you may contact Mr. David Jasinski, NHTSA Office of the Chief Counsel, Email: *David.Jasinski@dot.gov*. The mailing address of these officials is: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On October 26, 2026, NHTSA published an NPRM proposing to amend FMVSS No. 108.[1] The proposed updates to the standard are intended to remove unnecessary requirements and to provide design flexibility without impact on vehicle safety. The first two proposed changes would amend the test voltage specification for integral beam headlamps and remove requirements that apply to vertical headlamp arrangements. Further proposed changes address vehicles equipped with Automated Driving Systems (ADS) that do not have manually operated driving controls. Those modifications would limit the application of certain requirements for manually operated turn signal, hazard warning signal, and beam switching controls to vehicles with manually operated driving controls. The changes are intended to address regulatory burdens and costs associated with equipment that does not fulfill the same purpose or provide safety benefits in an ADS-equipped vehicle without manually operated driving controls as in a vehicle with such controls. The changes would also narrow certain requirements for telltales to vehicles with manually operated driving controls and incorporate the term ''telltale'' where appropriate throughout the standard. Finally, a proposed addition to the standard would allow cyan-colored ADS marker lamps as optional motor vehicle lighting equipment in ADS-equipped vehicles. The notice provided a 30-day comment period which closes on November 25, 2026.

NHTSA received a request from the Alliance on October 26, 2026 for a 15-day extension of the comment period.[2] The Alliance stated that the NPRM's 30-day comment period is insufficient given the technical and legal complexity of the proposed lighting requirements, their application to ADS-specific designs, and their potential effects on both ADS-equipped and traditional vehicles. The requested 15-day extension, the Alliance indicated, would support more substantive public feedback without materially delaying final rulemaking activity. NHTSA received similar requests from Gatik and SAE International. While Gatik also requested a 15-day extension, SAE International requested a 20-day extension. SAE International also asked if an extension is not granted, that NHTSA consider a partial submission within the time window with a subsequent filing after the closing date.

NHTSA is granting the request to extend the comment period by 15 days. NHTSA has determined that the requestors have shown good cause for an extension and that the extension is consistent with the public interest. A 15-day extension appropriately balances NHTSA's interest in providing the public with sufficient time to comment on the notice with its interest in obtaining specific feedback from stakeholders in a timely manner. In addition, to the extent possible NHTSA will also consider comments that Docket Management receives after the closing date. If Docket Management receives a comment too late for us to consider in developing the final rule, NHTSA will consider that comment as an informal suggestion for future rulemaking action. Accordingly, NHTSA is extending the comment period until December 10, 2026.[3]

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 322, 30111, 30115, 30117, and 30166; delegation of authority in 49 CFR 1.95.

Jonathan Morrison,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 2026–23239 Filed 11–13–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–59–P

[1] 91 FR 67243.

[2] Alliance for Automotive Innovation, Docket No. NHTSA–2026–1519–0009.

[3] Readers should note that, even after the comment closing date has passed, interested persons are able to file comments in the docket, which NHTSA will consider to the extent practicable. NHTSA may also continue to file relevant information in the docket as it becomes available. Accordingly, the Agency recommends that readers periodically check the docket for new material.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 261109–0002]

RIN 0648–BO04

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Pelagic Trawl Gear Definition

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

ACTION: Proposed rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes regulations to revise the regulatory definition of authorized fishing gear, including the definition of pelagic trawl gear, and the gear limitations for pelagic trawl gear, applicable to vessels in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off Alaska. This action is necessary to clearly allow the use of certain common components in codends and bycatch reduction devices, and to remove an outdated limitation on the use of parallel line trawls. This action is expected to provide additional flexibility and promote innovations in pelagic trawl gear design, which may reduce environmental impacts while maintaining efficient fishing operations. This action is intended to promote the goals and objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Groundfish of the Gulf of

Alaska Management Area (GOA FMP) and the FMP for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI FMP), and other applicable laws.

DATES: Submit comments on or before December 16, 2026.

ADDRESSES: A plain language summary of this proposed rule is available at *https://www.regulations.gov/docket/NOAA-NMFS-2026-0397.* You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2026–0397, by any of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Visit *https://www.regulations.gov* and type NOAA–NMFS–2026–0397 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 Draft Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review for Proposed Regulatory Amendment to modify the Pelagic Trawl Gear Definition (referred to as the ''Analysis'') prepared for this action are available from *https://www.regulations.gov* or from the NMFS Alaska Region website at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/alaska.* Electronic copies of the BSAI Groundfish FMP Amendment Action Summaries, the GOA Groundfish FMP Amendment Action Summaries, and the North Pacific Conservation and Spatial Management Areas in Alaska's EEZ Area Summaries are available from the NPFMC website at *https://www.npfmc.org/library/fmps-feps/.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Caleb Taylor, 907–586–7228, *caleb.taylor@noaa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fisheries in the EEZ off Alaska under the GOA FMP and BSAI FMP (the FMPs). The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared and recommended the FMPs under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.* Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the FMPs appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679. This proposed action is authorized under Magnuson-Stevens Act sections 303(c)(2) and 304(b) and modifies the regulations implementing sections 3.4.1 of both the BSAI and GOA FMPs, which describe the authorized gear types, and section 3.4.2 of the BSAI FMP, which specifies gear limitations by target fishery. This action would not change existing conservation and management measures established in the FMPs governing the management of specific stocks or species groups, such as harvest limits of target species, prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, habitat protection areas, and other applicable fishing regulations.

NMFS is soliciting public comments on this proposed rule. Comments must be received by the end of the comment period for this action (see **DATES**) to be considered by NMFS in deciding whether to adopt and implement revisions to the regulatory definition of pelagic trawl gear and limitations on the use of pelagic trawl gear.

Background

This action would revise the regulatory definition of authorized fishing gear, including the definition of pelagic trawl gear, and revise the limitations for pelagic trawl gear to clearly allow the continued use of common components in bycatch reduction devices and in codends attached to pelagic trawl gear. This action would also remove outdated text related to parallel line trawls.

This action was recommended by the Council under the authority of Magnuson-Stevens Act section 303(c)(2) to implement Section 3.4 of the BSAI FMP and the GOA FMP. ''Pelagic trawl gear'' has been defined under paragraph (14) of the definition of ''Authorized fishing gear'' at 50 CFR 679.2 since 1993 (58 FR 39680, July 26, 1993). However, pelagic trawl gear configurations have evolved over time due to technological innovations in gear design, material, sensing and sonar technologies, and in response to fishery management measures to reduce salmon bycatch. Many modern pelagic trawl gear components such as sensors and electronic instruments other than a net-sounder device and flotation used in bycatch excluder devices or in a codend may not comply with existing limitations. The current definition also limits metallic components, a vague term that could apply to many components regardless of intention. Further, current regulations would apply limitations in the pelagic trawl gear definition to an attached codend due to the national definition of ''codend'' at § 600.10, but it is not clear that NMFS Alaska Region intended for the limitations applicable in the EEZ off Alaska to apply to codends. This action is necessary to clearly allow the use of common components in codends and bycatch reduction devices, and to remove outdated text.

Fisheries Using Pelagic Trawl Gear

This proposed rule applies to vessels in the EEZ off Alaska, which includes the BSAI and GOA management areas. In both the BSAI and GOA management areas, pelagic trawl gear is used to target Alaska pollock (*Gadus chalcogrammus*) and to a lesser extent Pacific ocean perch (*Sebastes alutus,* POP). These fisheries are described in more detail in Chapter 3 of the Analysis prepared for this action (see **ADDRESSES**).

History of the Pelagic Trawl Gear Definition

The history and evolution of the pelagic trawl gear definition is described in more detail in the Analysis prepared for this action (Analysis Section 1.2, see **ADDRESSES**). Pelagic trawl gear requirements first appeared in Federal regulations in 1978 as a management and enforcement tool to protect juvenile halibut (43 FR 52709, November 14, 1978). Limitations on pelagic trawl gear components and configurations, as well as the definition of pelagic trawl gear, evolved from this time period through the late 1980s to protect commercially important benthic species such as halibut and crab in the GOA (52 FR 7868, March 13, 1987). In 1990 and 1991, NMFS implemented changes to the definition of pelagic trawl gear to further define and limit pelagic trawl gear components and configurations (55 FR 33715, August 17, 1990; 56 FR 2700, January 24, 1991).

Reducing halibut and crab bycatch was a primary driver in the need to distinguish pelagic trawl gear from nonpelagic trawl gear in the early 1990s. For example, NMFS prohibited directed fishing with trawl gear other than pelagic trawl gear in the BSAI pollock and Pacific cod trawl fisheries when halibut PSC allowances had been reached (55 FR 33715, August 17, 1990; 56 FR 2700, January 24, 1991). Large mesh openings of at least 1 meter (m)

(3.3 feet (ft)) or parallel lines at the front of pelagic trawl gear were required to reduce bycatch of benthic species such as halibut and crab while also reducing drag in the water column. However, during the 1991 and 1992 fisheries, some fishermen were able to defeat the purpose of the pelagic trawl gear definition by reconfiguring their trawl gear in such a way that it complied with the definition but functioned as a nonpelagic trawl, resulting in increased halibut and crab bycatches. To address this management problem and related bycatch concerns, the current definition of pelagic trawl gear at § 679.2 was implemented in 1993 (58 FR 39680, July 26, 1993).

At § 679.2, trawl gear is defined as a funnel-shaped net that is towed through the water by one or more vessels and is further described as pelagic or nonpelagic. Pelagic trawl gear is currently defined as a trawl that has no discs, bobbins, or rollers; no chafe protection gear attached to the footrope or fishing line; conforms to certain mesh size and parallel line spacing restrictions; uses a limited amount of flotation to accommodate a net-sounder device; has no more than one fishing line and one footrope for a total of no more than two weighted lines on the bottom of the trawl between the wing tip and the fishing circle; and has no metallic components except for connectors or a net-sounder device. This pelagic trawl gear definition—along with the rapid evolution of pelagic trawl gear designs in the early 1990s—has successfully reduced halibut and crab bycatch in the BSAI and GOA. Nonpelagic trawl gear is defined as a trawl other than a pelagic trawl, meaning any trawl that is not compliant with the definition of pelagic trawl gear at § 679.2.

All trawl gear terminates in a ''codend,'' which NMFS defined in 1996 in nationally-applicable regulations at § 600.10 as the terminal, closed end of a trawl net. The codend is typically purchased separately from a pelagic trawl net and is attached to the end of a pelagic trawl along a selvedge line. When NMFS implemented the definition of pelagic trawl gear applicable in the fisheries off Alaska in 1993, NMFS did not specify whether limitations in the pelagic trawl gear definition apply to the codend. However, because the national definition of codend implemented in 1996 specifies that the codend is part of the trawl net rather than a separate component, a codend attached to pelagic trawl gear is subject to the limitations in the current pelagic trawl gear definition at § 679.2.

Summary of Management Changes Since 1993

Management of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska has changed substantially since the implementation of the pelagic trawl gear definition in 1993. For example, NMFS has implemented numerous rationalization and limited entry programs that reduced fishing effort and reduced bycatch (alongside numerous stand-alone bycatch reduction actions). Additionally, significant improvements in fishery-dependent data collection have been implemented since 1993, including increased observer coverage and electronic monitoring, at-sea catch weighing requirements for trawl C/Ps, and additional recordkeeping and reporting requirements. Each of these advancements has resulted in improved precision of catch and discard estimates over time, in turn contributing to more precise management.

The sections below on the trawl gear performance standard, salmon bycatch, and pelagic trawl gear design provide additional details on relevant changes to the fisheries since 1993 that impact the use of pelagic trawl gear. Additional information on all amendments to the BSAI and GOA FMPs are summarized in the BSAI Groundfish FMP Amendment Action Summaries and the GOA Groundfish FMP Amendment Action Summaries (see **ADDRESSES**).

Trawl Gear Performance Standard

NMFS implemented a trawl gear performance standard in conjunction with the revised definition of pelagic trawl gear in 1993 to ''discourage or prevent trawl operations on the seabed when halibut and crab PSC allowances had been reached'' (58 FR 17196, April 1, 1993). They revised the standard in 2000 when NMFS prohibited the use of nonpelagic trawl gear in the BSAI pollock fishery (65 FR 31105, May 16, 2000). The performance standard, as specified in regulations at § 679.7(a)(14), prohibits a vessel engaged in directed fishing for pollock, except for CVs in the trawl electronic monitoring category, from having 20 or more crabs of any species with a carapace width of more than 1.5 inches (in) (38 millimeters) at the widest dimension, on board at any one time. The standard is tied to crabs because they inhabit the seabed and, if caught with trawl gear, are evidence that a trawl has been in contact with the seafloor.

This proposed rule would not modify the trawl gear performance standard. However, this proposed rule would modify the definition of pelagic trawl gear and provide additional flexibility for instruments, such as sensors and electronic or mechanical instruments, to be attached to the gear, which could be used to better understand pelagic trawl gear performance.

Salmon Bycatch in Pelagic Trawl Gear

Pacific salmon are caught incidentally as bycatch in pollock fisheries by vessels using pelagic trawl gear in both the BSAI and GOA management areas and are designated as PSC. Of the five species of Pacific salmon, Chinook and chum salmon most commonly occur in the same locations as pollock. Consequently, Chinook salmon and chum salmon are the salmon species most often caught in pelagic trawl gear as fishermen target pollock. The Council has recommended and NMFS has implemented several management measures to limit salmon bycatch in the BS subarea, AI subarea, and GOA trawl fisheries (Analysis Section 5.3, see **ADDRESSES**). Salmon bycatch measures in place for the BS subarea, AI subarea, and GOA groundfish fisheries are in Federal regulations at § 679.21(f), (g), and (h), with the most recent measures implemented through amendment 110 to the BSAI FMP and amendment 103 to the GOA FMP (81 FR 37534, June 10, 2016; 81 FR 62659, September 12, 2016).

A crucial component of salmon bycatch reduction has been the advent and use of salmon excluder devices (*i.e.,* gear modifications designed to allow salmon to exit a trawl net in the water while retaining pollock) in pelagic trawl gear. Beginning in 2001, Alaska Fisheries Science Center scientists worked alongside Alaska fishing industry partners and gear manufacturers to design and test salmon excluder devices to reduce salmon bycatch from pelagic trawl gear. They did so through use of Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) developed in consultation with the Council and issued by NMFS. An EFP is a permit that allows fishing activities that would otherwise be prohibited under Federal regulations.

Current salmon excluder devices used in pelagic trawl gear are generally located forward of the codend. Excluder design has evolved over time based on the behavior of the salmon species targeted for release, and the success rates of bycatch reduction and minimal escapement of pollock. Current salmon excluder devices in use are focused on Chinook escapement from pelagic trawl gear, although novel research is focused on reducing chum salmon bycatch in pelagic trawl gear (Analysis Section 1.1.1, see **ADDRESSES**). Experimentation with salmon excluder design and

placement in pelagic trawl gear is crucial to troubleshoot and determine the most effective configuration for maximum salmon escapement with minimal loss of pollock and continues to be a major driver of innovation in pelagic trawl gear. Salmon excluder designs in pelagic trawl gear are an effective method of reducing Chinook salmon bycatch.

The BS pollock fishery participants actively work to reduce salmon bycatch through several measures. For instance, the Council recommended and NMFS implemented incentive plan agreements (IPAs) through amendment 110 to the BSAI FMP that require signatories to use salmon excluder devices in pelagic trawl gear (§ 679.21(f)(12)(iii)(E)(*11*)) while fishing for pollock in the BS pollock fishery (81 FR 37534, June 10, 2016). More recently, at the February 2026 meeting, the Council passed a final motion recommending additional management measures to reduce chum salmon bycatch in the BS pollock fishery. A component of this motion builds upon the IPA framework established under amendment 110 and would require the use of salmon excluders for the purpose of reducing chum salmon bycatch. NMFS is in the process of reviewing the Council's recommendations. In the AI pollock fishery, current measures focus on reducing Chinook salmon bycatch through set Chinook PSC limits for the AI pollock fishery and CDQ Program and subsequent area closures if Chinook PSC limits are reached (§ 679.21(g)).

Amendment 93 to the GOA groundfish FMP established bycatch mitigation measures in the GOA (77 FR 42629, July 20, 2012). These measures include maximum annual Chinook salmon PSC limits, buffer incentives for reducing Chinook salmon PSC in two non-pollock fisheries (trawl C/P and non-Rockfish Program CV sectors), annual caps on reapportionment of unused Chinook salmon PSC, and fishery closures if Chinook salmon PSC limits are reached (§ 679.21(h)). Trawl CVs participating in the GOA pollock fishery also voluntarily use salmon bycatch excluders to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch.

Pelagic Trawl Gear Design

Pelagic trawl gear configurations have evolved since 1993 due to technological innovations in gear design, material, sensing and sonar technologies, and in response to fishery management measures to reduce salmon bycatch with the development of salmon excluder devices. For CVs and C/Ps in BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries, pelagic trawl gear consists of large forward mesh (ranging from 60 in (152.4 centimeters (cm)) up to 210 ft (64 m) stretched mesh size) made of relatively small, polyethylene twine sizes to reduce drag (Analysis Section 3.2, see **ADDRESSES**). Trawl gear size varies based on vessel size and horsepower, such that larger and more powerful C/Ps tow larger trawls than smaller CVs. Figure 3–1 in the Analysis provides a generalized figure of pelagic trawl gear and associated components for reference (see **ADDRESSES**).

Vessels use cables or strong synthetic ropes as the warp to connect to and tow their pelagic trawl gear. The warp is attached to two large trawl doors, which keep the trawl net open while it is being towed. The trawl doors are connected to the wing tips of pelagic trawl gear by lengths of cable or synthetic rope bridles. Clump weights, attached to the bottom wing tips on each end of the footrope, are used to weigh the bottom forward section of the net down, while the trawl doors and hydrodynamic forces lift and spread the net's upper wing tips and headrope up to open the trawl. Footropes typically extend 590 ft (180 m) to 1,475 ft (450 m) from wing tip to wing tip and there are no discs, rollers, or bobbins attached to the trawl footrope or any other portion of pelagic trawl gear. Stretched mesh sizes are tapered in pelagic trawl gear, gradually transitioning from characteristically large meshes in the wings and forward section of the trawl (60 in (152.4 cm) up to 210 ft (64 m) stretched mesh size) and decreasing in size by half for each additional section down to 4 in (10.2 cm) or smaller stretched mesh size in the codend. For example, pelagic trawl gear may have a forward mesh section consisting of 64 in (162.56 cm) stretched mesh size connected aft to a section consisting of 32 in (81.28 cm) stretched mesh size, which is then connected to a 16 in (40.64 cm) mesh section, which is then connected to a section with 8 in (20.32 cm) stretched mesh size, which is connected to a codend with 4 in (10.2 cm) stretched mesh size. Trawl codends are usually made with polyethylene netting attached to four longitudinal riblines, typically with a stretched mesh size of 4 in (10.2 cm) to 4.5 in (11.43 cm). The riblines—heavy rope that runs down the sides, top, or underside of a trawl net from the mouth of the net to the terminal end of the codend to strengthen the net during fishing—are typically made of chain, wire, or strong synthetic rope. Chain riblines are often used to strengthen codends for the safety of crew and protection of catch since chain riblines are durable over repeated hauls and can reduce the chance of net failure. Codends may have container lines and sacrificial chafing gear attached to restrict the expansion of the netting, prevent damage, and allow the codend to be hauled up a stern ramp without abrasion to the net.

Floats are commonly used in the codend to counteract the weight of chain riblines. Fishery participants have stated that flotation in the codend additionally helps maintain the tapered net shape and hydrodynamic flow while deploying the net and can aid the haulback process. Floats can also maintain neutral buoyancy in codends to prevent seafloor contact if there is an increase in drag and weight from a catch with burst swim bladders (*i.e.,* fish with burst swim bladders are not buoyant, are heavier, and increase drag).

Many instruments are used in modern pelagic trawl gear in addition to a net-sounder device or net transducer, including live feed cameras and catch sensors. Net-sounder devices have largely been replaced by sonars which provide real time visualization of net parameters and catch entering the net to vessel operators. Live feed cameras have also been widely adopted that allow vessel operators to visualize catch entering the net in real time, enabling them to make fine scale adjustments to the net shape and positioning to maximize catch of targeted species and minimize catch of nontargeted species. Catch sensors are also commonly mounted at various positions along the net, including just forward of the codend. This allows vessel operators to monitor codend fullness and determine when to haul the net. Each of these components are valuable tools used to increase fishing efficiency, monitor catch rates and composition, and make other operational fishing decisions.

A significant operating cost consideration for vessels using and modifying pelagic trawl gear is fuel usage (Analysis Section 3.2.4, see **ADDRESSES**). Vessel owners and operators consider net modifications to determine whether they minimize operational costs of the gear, maximize total revenue over a unit of time, and have any effect on drag, towing time, and subsequent fuel burn rate. Often, new gear designs or modifications are tested extensively prior to use by the fishing fleet. Flume tank tests or field gear experiments may be used to evaluate trawl gear modifications to minimize operating costs.

Need for the Proposed Action

A clear definition of pelagic trawl gear is necessary for consistent enforcement and compliance monitoring in areas where use of nonpelagic trawl gear is

prohibited. The Council recommended this action to simplify and update the definition of pelagic trawl gear, modify limitations on pelagic trawl gear to clearly allow the use of common components in codends and bycatch reduction devices, allow instrumentation necessary to monitor and adjust net performance, and remove outdated text related to parallel line trawls. Pelagic trawl gear design has evolved since 1993 (when the current definition was adopted) in response to numerous factors including fishery management measures and technological innovations. Some gear components such as sensors, electronic instruments (other than a net-sounder device), other metallic components, and flotation used in bycatch excluder devices or in a codend may not comply with the existing definition of pelagic trawl gear. Updates to the pelagic trawl gear definition are therefore necessary to clearly allow the continued use of salmon bycatch excluders in pelagic trawl gear and to provide greater flexibility for innovation in pelagic trawl gear design to better understand and avoid gear impacts on the seafloor and unobserved mortality of commercially important crab species.

This action is not expected to change overall fishing effort or the locations where fishing with pelagic trawl gear occurs. Therefore, this action is not expected to change the impacts of fishing with pelagic trawl gear on environmental components such as salmon PSC and benthic habitats (Analysis Section 5.3, see **ADDRESSES**).

This action would clearly allow commonly-used pelagic trawl gear configurations by modifying the regulatory limitations applicable to certain pelagic trawl gear components. Additionally, this action would allow vessels to employ all salmon bycatch excluders currently in use and could facilitate future bycatch reduction innovations, which would be beneficial for current and future efforts to reduce salmon bycatch by vessels fishing with pelagic trawl gear. Components in salmon excluders that are currently limited by the pelagic trawl gear definition include weighted components such as flapper panels (a weighted panel that blocks access to escapement holes when the vessel is under power, but drops during reduced water flow to allow salmon to escape) that contain or use metallic components; flotation; and electronic instruments and sensors including lights.

This action would not change the overall fishery management structure, including the harvest limits for target species that are specified in the annual harvest specifications, PSC limits for species like salmon, timing of fishing, the areas where fishing activity is authorized to occur, existing habitat protections such as closed areas, or any other fishing regulations applicable to existing fishing operations. NMFS expects that most pelagic trawl gear configurations already in use by vessels owners and operators would comply with the proposed definition of pelagic trawl gear and the limitations proposed at § 679.24(g) without the need for substantial modifications. However, this proposed action would allow vessel owners and operators more flexibility to voluntarily choose to adopt a wide range of new and advancing technologies.

Proposed Action and Rationale for Changes

This action would: (1) specify that pelagic trawl gear limitations do not apply to the codend; (2) remove outdated text related to parallel line trawls; (3) remove flotation limitations and references to metallic components; (4) prohibit the use of metal chains aft of the fishing circle and forward of 15 in (38.1 cm) stretched mesh size except for short lengths of chain used to prevent twisting; (5) allow bycatch excluder devices in pelagic trawl gear; and (6) allow sensors and electronic or mechanical instruments that can be used to observe or monitor the fishing gear, catch, fishing activity, fishing environment, or that are designed to adjust the fishing gear, exclude bycatch, or minimize contact with the seafloor.

To accomplish these goals, regulations would be revised to: (1) implement a simpler definition of pelagic trawl gear in paragraph (14) of the definition of ''Authorized fishing gear'' at § 679.2; (2) add language at § 679.24(g) that limits specific gear components that may be used in pelagic trawl gear; (3) add a prohibition at § 679.7 to ensure pelagic trawl gear is compliant with all limitations applicable to pelagic trawl gear at § 679.2 and § 679.24(g); and (4) make minor housekeeping revisions to regulations at § 679.2, § 679.7, and § 679.24 to correct a spelling error and improve consistency in regulations. These revisions and their effects are described in more detail in this section.

The definition of pelagic trawl gear—at paragraph (14) of the definition of ''Authorized fishing gear'' at § 679.2—would be revised and simplified, focusing on the two key characteristics that differentiate pelagic trawl gear from nonpelagic trawl gear. Pelagic trawl gear would be defined as a trawl gear that has: (1) no discs, bobbins, or rollers forward of the codend; and (2) no chafe protection gear attached to the footrope or fishing line. The definition would make it simpler to distinguish pelagic trawl gear from nonpelagic trawl gear when enforcing areas closed to directed fishing with nonpelagic trawl gear. Footrope protection gear (*e.g.,* discs, bobbins, or rollers) is typically found only on nonpelagic trawl gear and allows the footrope of nonpelagic trawl gear to be operated on the seafloor. Chafe protection gear attached to the footrope or fishing line serves the same purpose. This proposed rule also makes clarifying technical edits to the definition of nonpelagic trawl gear, which encompasses all trawl gear designs that do not meet the revised definition of pelagic trawl gear.

The Council recommended and NMFS proposes regulations that do not include parallel line spacing limitations that prevent the use of a variation of pelagic trawl gear known as a parallel line trawl. The parallel line trawl variation of pelagic trawl gear is currently regulated at § 679.2(14)(iii)(B). However, this gear variation is now obsolete, having been replaced by the more efficient mesh pelagic trawl gear over time. Therefore, this regulation is no longer necessary and would be removed.

Sections 679.2(iii) through (x) of the existing pelagic trawl gear definition (within the definition of authorized fishing gear), which specify limitations on the use of pelagic trawl gear, would be removed. In their place, regulations limiting the use of pelagic trawl gear specifications and components would be added at § 679.24(g). Proposed regulations at § 679.24(g) would also clarify that pelagic trawl gear limitations apply to all portions of pelagic trawl gear, except for the attached codend. These revisions would allow the use of floats, chain riblines, sensing or monitoring instruments, and any other components in codends attached to pelagic trawl gear. The limitations at § 679.24(g) would be organized in two groups: (1) specific components that are limited on all portions of pelagic trawl gear, except the attached codend; and (2) specific components that may be used in pelagic trawl gear.

Proposed regulations at § 679.24(g)(1) describe the specifications and components that are limited or not allowed in pelagic trawl gear, except in the codend, including mesh specifications, instrument limitations, footrope and fishing line limitations, and limitations on the length and location of metal chains in pelagic trawl gear. These regulations would maintain

current limitations on stretched mesh sizes and the number of footropes and fishing lines allowed (*i.e.,* only one footrope and one fishing line).

Section 679.24(g)(1)(i) would include large mesh specifications for pelagic trawl gear, stating that pelagic trawl gear must have no less than 20 in (50.8 cm) between each knot or connector that attaches mesh to the fishing line, headrope, or breast line. Section 679.24(g)(1)(ii) would state that pelagic trawl gear aft of all points on the fishing line, headrope, and breast lines has no stretched mesh size of less than 60 in (152.4 cm) extending past the fishing circle for a distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's length overall (LOA). Section 679.24(g)(1)(iii) would state that pelagic trawl gear aft of the mesh described in paragraph (g)(1)(ii) has no stretched mesh size less than 15 in (38.1 cm) for a distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's LOA. Section 679.24(g)(1)(iv) would ensure that forward meshes remain open and unimpeded by prohibiting configurations in pelagic trawl gear to reduce regulated forward mesh sizes (*i.e.,* prevent gear configurations that would allow large meshes to be pulled together such that they would function as smaller meshes). Section 679.24(g)(1)(iv) differs from the existing paragraph (14)(v) of the definition of pelagic trawl gear in that, rather than using the phrase ''configuration *intended to reduce* stretched mesh sizes'', § 679.24(g)(1)(iv) would use the phrase ''configuration *that reduces* the stretched mesh sizes.'' This change would improve enforceability by tying compliance to a measurable standard rather than intent. Maintaining the minimum stretched mesh size requirements for large forward meshes is an important characteristic of pelagic trawl gear. Large meshes reduce drag, which contributes to increased efficiency, and allows some non-target species such as halibut and crab to escape if pelagic trawl gear contacts the seafloor.

Section 679.24(g)(1)(v) would limit pelagic trawl gear to no more than one fishing line and one footrope on the bottom of pelagic trawl gear. The current definition states that pelagic trawl gear can have no more than one fishing line and one footrope for a total of no more than two weighted lines on the bottom of the trawl. This action would remove the reference to ''weighted lines,'' to avoid limiting the material used in the fishing line or footrope to only weighted lines, because that limitation on material serves no conservation or management purpose. Section 679.24(g)(1)(v) would also continue to ensure that the total number of lines in the bottom, forward section of pelagic trawl gear is limited to no more than one fishing line and one footrope. A footrope is generally made of chain, while a fishing line is generally made of synthetic material. A footrope is typically connected to the fishing line with short lengths of evenly spaced chains known as chain droppers or drop chains. The fishing line and footrope located on the bottom of pelagic trawl gear between the wing tips and the fishing circle are the pelagic trawl gear components that are most likely to contact the seafloor. Section 679.24(g)(1)(v) would prevent the use of additional fishing lines or footropes that could armor the net and, therein, facilitate increased bottom contact by pelagic trawl gear.

The Council recommended and NMFS proposes to remove reference to and limits on metallic components used in the existing definition of pelagic trawl gear, with one exception. Namely, under proposed § 679.24(g)(1)(vi), metal chains greater than 10 ft (3.05 m) in length would not be allowed in the middle portion of the net—that is, not allowed aft of the fishing circle and forward of any stretched mesh size greater than 15 in (38.1 cm). The Council and NMFS intend this provision to prohibit metal chains from being used to armor the middle portion of pelagic trawl gear such that there could be increased potential for seafloor contact.

While this provision would restrict the use of most metal chains in the middle portion, or ''belly'' of the net, short chains—equal to or less than 10 ft (3.05m) in lengthfor a total of no more than 100 linear feet (30.48 m) of metal chains—could be used to prevent twisting during net deployment. These chains, or other weighted materials that are not limited by this action, can help spread open and maintain net orientation when trawl gear is deployed in adverse conditions, reducing the potential for net twisting and entanglement, which can be costly and time consuming to repair (Analysis Section 4.3.5, see **ADDRESSES**). Limiting metal chains in the middle of the net to only those shorter than 10 ft (3.05m) for a total length of no more than 100 linear feet (30.48 m) should allow current practices to continue for CV and C/P pelagic trawls. NMFS requests public comment on the proposed length of each metal chain and the limitation on the total linear feet of chain identified in proposed § 679.24(g)(1)(vi). Specifically, whether these chain lengths are adequate for proper gear deployment and whether these chain lengths would armor the belly of the net in a manner that would make the net more suitable to be fished in contact with the seafloor.

This action would allow all other metallic components in pelagic trawl gear, as many serve important conservation and management purposes (*e.g.,* components in some bycatch excluder devices are metallic, as are certain sensors and instruments). Under this proposed action, by removing the reference to metallic components in § 679.2(viii) of the existing pelagic trawl gear definition (within the definition of authorized fishing gear), dropchains connecting the footrope to the fishing line would be clearly permissible. Connectors, synthetic lines including metal threads, lead beads, or lead cores would also be allowed anywhere in pelagic trawl gear.

Section 679.24(g)(2) would list components that are explicitly allowed or may be used in pelagic trawl gear, including sensors and electronic or mechanical instruments, small mesh panels used to attach such instruments, weights on the wing tips (as under current regulations), and bycatch excluder devices. Under this action, the use of sensors and electronic or mechanical instruments in pelagic trawl gear would be expanded beyond the single net-sounder device allowed under current regulations.

Section 679.24(g)(2)(i)(A) and (B) would specify the types of instruments allowed in pelagic trawl gear. Allowed sensors and electronic or mechanical instruments would include those that are: (1) capable of illuminating, observing, or monitoring the fishing gear, catch, fishing activity, or fishing environment; or (2) designed to adjust the fishing gear, exclude bycatch, or minimize contact with the seafloor. By removing restrictions on the use of metallic components, proposed regulations would allow sensors and instruments containing metal on pelagic trawl gear.

The Council recommended and NMFS proposes these provisions to allow lights, live-feed cameras, and other commonly used sensors and instruments in addition to net-sounder devices. Further, this action would allow electronic or mechanical instruments that are designed to adjust the fishing gear, exclude bycatch, or minimize contact with the seafloor, to be attached to pelagic trawl gear. This could support the adoption of innovative technologies on pelagic trawl gear that could be used to support a wide range of bycatch excluder devices and improve understanding of how the gear operates. By allowing these

instruments and components, this action would allow bycatch excluder devices to be attached anywhere on pelagic trawl gear in line with Council and NMFS management goals and with current fishing operations. NMFS requests public comment on whether any bycatch excluder devices would be prohibited under the proposed regulations to ensure that this action does not limit bycatch reduction innovations. No conservation or management reasons for limiting sensors, instruments, and related components have been identified. The proposed action would also provide flexibility to the fleet to continue to improve instruments that are designed to adjust deployed fishing gear and minimize contact with the seafloor.

Section 679.24(g)(2)(ii) would allow mesh panels made of any stretched mesh size to be used anywhere in the net to attach sensors and other types of electronic or mechanical instruments. Section 679.2(14)(ix) of the existing pelagic trawl gear definition currently allows small mesh within 32 ft (9.8 m) of the center of the headrope to attach a net-sounder device. Because this action would allow many other types of instruments to be used throughout pelagic trawl gear, this action would remove existing restrictions on where small mesh panels can be used to attach instruments to pelagic trawl gear.

Section 679.24(g)(2)(iii) would ensure that weights can be attached to pelagic trawl gear wing tips. The fishing circle and ''mouth'' of pelagic trawl gear opens as a vessel tows it through the water and resistance from trawl doors spreads the wing tips outward, while clump weights pull the bottom wing tips down. Weights connected to trawl wing tips are necessary for the function of the gear and would continue to be allowed under this action in line with current regulations.

Flotation would not be limited under this proposed action and would be allowed anywhere on pelagic trawl gear. No identified conservation risks or other anticipated environmental impacts were identified in the Analysis from allowing flotation in pelagic trawl gear (Analysis, Section 2.3, see **ADDRESSES**). Removing the limit on flotation would allow floats to be used as necessary, recognizing that pelagic trawl gear configurations are focused on maximizing efficiency and reducing drag. Flotation is often beneficial to the design and proper function of bycatch excluder devices, and may also be useful for supporting instruments in pelagic trawl gear.

A prohibition would be added at § 679.7(a)(17) that makes it unlawful for any person to retain groundfish taken with pelagic trawl gear that does not comply with § 679.24(g). This would prohibit vessel owners, operators, or permit holders from using trawl gear to retain groundfish in areas closed to nonpelagic gear unless the gear meets the definition of pelagic trawl gear at § 679.2 and the pelagic trawl gear limitations at § 679.24.

This proposed action would also make minor housekeeping revisions to regulations at § 679.2, § 679.7, and § 679.24 to improve consistency in regulations, clarify specific pelagic trawl gear components, and make technical corrections:

- At § 679.2, the introductory text for the definition of ''Authorized fishing gear'' would be revised to remove the list of gear categories including trawl gear, fixed gear, longline gear, pot gear, and nontrawl gear. This list was not exhaustive and not necessary to retain in the introductory text because each of the categories is further defined in the subparagraphs.
- At § 679.2(1),the definition of ''Authorized fishing gear'' would be revised to reorder the listed gear types that constitute ''bottom contact gear'' so that they appear in alphabetical order and correspond to the order they are listed in subsequent paragraphs.
- At § 679.2, to improve consistency in referring to the numerous listed types of authorized fishing gear, the word ''gear'' is proposed to be added to the definition of ''Dredge gear'' in paragraph (3), ''Longline pot gear'' in paragraph (10), and ''Nonpelagic trawl gear'' in paragraph (12).
- At § 679.2, this proposed rule would revise the definition of ''Fishing line'' to clarify that there are no restrictions on the material used to construct the line. This would allow for synthetic rope instead of only chains to be used as the fishing line. These updates are necessary to reflect technological advances in the materials used for fishing gear. For example, a type of lightweight synthetic rope, up to five times stronger than steel, is commonly used in modern pelagic trawl gear fishing lines.
- At § 679.2, the definition of ''net-sounder device'' would be removed. This definition is no longer necessary because the term would no longer appear in in the definition of pelagic trawl gear at § 679.2, nor would it appear in the updated limitations on pelagic trawl gear at 679.24(g).
- At § 679.7(a)(9), the word ''anything'' would be added to clarify that groundfish taken with ''anything'' other that authorized fishing gear as defined in § 679.2 is prohibited for retention. This revision would clarify the existing regulation without altering the intent.
- At § 679.24(b)(1), the heading would be changed from ''Pots'' to ''Longline pot gear''. This change would be more descriptive of the gear type that is limited by that paragraph.
- At § 679.24(b)(3), the following non-substantive changes are proposed to clarify this limitation: (1) the heading ''Trawl footrope'' would be revised to ''GOA trawl gear footrope limitation''; (2) the phrase ''No person trawling'' would be revised to ''No person using trawl gear''; and (3) the phrase ''GOA area'' would be changed to ''GOA regulatory area.'' These proposed clarifications do not change the limitation in this paragraph as implemented in 1987 and most recently modified in 2002 (52 FR 7817, March 13, 1987; 67 FR 4100, January 28, 2002).
- At § 679.24(e)(6), the word ''notwithstanding'' would be revised to correct a spelling error.

Classification

Rulemaking Authority

Pursuant to section 304(b)(1)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this proposed rule is consistent with the BSAI and GOA FMPs for groundfish, other provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law, subject to further consideration after public comment.

National Environmental Policy Act Statement

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, NMFS prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that discusses the impact on the quality of the human environment as a result of this rule. Pelagic trawl fishing effort, time, and location are not expected to change as a result of this action and therefore environmental impacts of the groundfish fisheries are not expected to change as a result of this action. Further, because this action is intended to clearly authorize commonly used gear configurations, impacts to benthic habitat from gear contact are also not expected to increase as a result of this action. This action would clearly allow the use of bycatch excluder devices in pelagic trawl gear, which supports past conservation actions to reduce bycatch of PSC species from pelagic trawl gear. A copy of the EA is available from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**).

E.O. 12866 Statement

This proposed rule has been determined to be significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

E.O. 14192 Statement

This proposed rule is expected to be an Executive Order 14192 deregulatory action because it reduced the economic burden for regulated entities.

Certification Under the Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Senior Lead Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration that this proposed rule, if adopted, would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The purpose of this action is to revise regulations related to pelagic trawl gear to clearly allow commonly used gear configurations (including components in codends and bycatch excluder devices), allow instrumentation necessary to monitor and adjust net performance, and remove unnecessary outdated text. NMFS anticipates no additional costs to fishery participants because no current vessel owner would need to change their existing pelagic trawl gear under these proposed regulations.

This action would directly regulate participants in the BSAI and GOA trawl gear fisheries. This includes entities operating vessels with groundfish Federal Fisheries Permits catching FMP groundfish using pelagic trawl gear in Federal waters (including those receiving direct allocations of groundfish). From 2019 to 2024, 147 vessels utilized pelagic trawl gear. Of those, 128 were active in 2024. There were 67 vessels that used pelagic trawl gear in the GOA and 103 vessels in the BSAI from 2019 to 2024. Of the 147 active vessels from 2019 to 2024, 32 vessels are considered small entities based on average annual revenue from 2019 to 2024. Of the active vessels in the BSAI, 5 were small entities, and 27 of the vessels active in the GOA were small entities.

The alternatives and associated options would generally allow industry to adapt rather than require gear modifications beyond what is currently in use to comply with the new definition of pelagic trawl gear and would provide more flexibility for gear innovations related to bycatch reduction and minimizing contact with the seafloor. As such, this action is not expected to create significant negative effects on a substantial number of directly regulated small entities. This action would not affect the harvest limits, season dates, areas fished, PSC or PSC limits, and all other measures currently in place. Therefore, the action is not expected to cause a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. As a result, an initial regulatory flexibility analysis is not required and none has been prepared.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

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

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 679

Alaska, Fisheries, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: November 12, 2026.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

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

For the reasons set out in the preamble, NMFS proposes to amend 50 CFR part 679 as follows:

PART 679—FISHERIES OF THE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE OFF ALASKA

■ 1. The authority citation for part 679 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.;* 1801 *et seq.;* 3631 *et seq.;* Pub. L. 108–447; Pub. L. 111–281.

■ 2. Amend § 679.2 by:
■ a. Revising the definition of ''Authorized fishing gear'' introductory text and paragraphs (1), (3), (10), (12), and (14),
and the definition of ''Fishing line''; and
■ b. Removing the definition for ''Net-sounder device''.

The revisions read as follows:

§ 679.2 Definitions.

* * * * *

Authorized fishing gear (see also § 679.24 for gear limitations and Table 15 to this part for gear codes) means:

(1) *Bottom contact gear* means dinglebar gear, dredge gear, hook-and-line gear, nonpelagic trawl gear, or pot gear.

* * * * *

(3) *Dredge gear* means a dredge-like device designed specifically for and capable of taking scallops by being towed along the ocean floor.

* * * * *

(10) *Longline pot gear* means a stationary, buoyed, and anchored line with two or more pots attached, or the taking of fish by means of such a device.

* * * * *

(12) *Nonpelagic trawl gear* means trawl gear other than pelagic trawl gear.

* * * * *

(14) *Pelagic trawl gear* means trawl gear that has no:

(i) Discs, bobbins, or rollers forward of the codend (see 50 CFR 600.10 of this title); or

(ii) Chafe protection gear attached to the footrope or the fishing line.

* * * * *

Fishing line means a continuous length of chain, wire rope, or rope in the bottom front end of a trawl between the wing tips and the fishing circle to which the webbing, meshes, or lead ropes are attached.

* * * * *

■ 3. In § 679.7, revise paragraphs (a)(9) and (a)(17) to read as follows:

§ 679.7 Prohibitions.

* * * * *

(a) * * *

(9) *Authorized fishing gear.* Retain groundfish taken with anything other than authorized fishing gear as defined in § 679.2, except that groundfish incidentally taken by pot gear by a vessel while participating in an open crab season governed by the State of Alaska may be retained for use as unprocessed bait on board that vessel.

* * * * *

(17) *Pelagic Trawl Gear.* Retain groundfish taken with pelagic trawl gear, as defined at § 679.2, that does not comply with the limitations specified at § 679.24(g).

* * * * *

■ 4. Amend § 679.24 by:
■ a. Revising paragraph (b)(1) introductory text and paragraph (b)(3);
■ b. Removing the word, ''Nothwithstanding'' and adding in its place, ''Notwithstanding'' in paragraph (e)(6); and
■ c. Adding paragraph (g).

These revisions and addition read as follows:

§ 679.24 Gear limitations.

* * * * *

(b) * * *

(1) *Longline pot gear.* Any person using longline pot gear must treat any catch of groundfish as a prohibited species, except:

* * * * *

(3) *GOA trawl gear footrope limitation.* No person using trawl gear in any GOA regulatory area limited to pelagic trawl gear under § 679.22 may allow the footrope of that trawl gear to be in contact with the seabed for more than 10 percent of the period of any tow.

* * * * *

(g) *Pelagic trawl gear.*

(1) Except for the codend (see 50 CFR 600.10 of this title), pelagic trawl gear

must comply with the following limitations:

(i) Has no less than 20 inches (50.8 cm) between each knot or connector that attaches mesh to the fishing line, headrope, or breast line;

(ii) Aft of all points on the fishing line, headrope, and breast lines, has no stretched mesh size less than 60 inches (152.4 cm) extending past the fishing circle for a distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's LOA;

(iii) Aft of the mesh described in paragraph (g)(1)(ii) of this section, has no stretched mesh size less than 15 inches (38.1 cm) for a distance equal to or greater than one half the vessel's LOA;

(iv) Contains no net configuration that reduces the stretched mesh sizes described in paragraphs (g)(1)(ii) and (iii) of this section;

(v) Has no more than one fishing line and one footrope on the bottom of the trawl gear; and

(vi) Has no metal chains longer than 10 ft (3.05 m) for a total of no more than 100 linear feet (30.48 m) of metal chain aft of the fishing circle and forward of any stretched mesh size greater than 15 inches (38.1 cm).

(2) Pelagic trawl gear, including the codend (see 50 CFR 600.10 of this title), may include:

(i) Sensors and electronic or mechanical instruments if they are:

(A) Capable of illuminating, observing, or monitoring the fishing gear, catch, fishing activity, or fishing environment; or

(B) Designed to adjust the fishing gear, exclude bycatch, or minimize contact with the seafloor;

(ii) Notwithstanding paragraph (g)(1) of this section, mesh panels made of any stretched mesh size to which sensors and electronic or mechanical instruments, described in paragraph (g)(2)(i) of this section, are attached; and

(iii) Weights on the wing tips.

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