

include simultaneous exposure to UV light, temperature, and humidity. To accomplish these stages, NIST and participants intend to perform the following tasks:

1. Identify critical polymeric materials and important chemistries;
2. Establish the characterization methods for performance tracking;
3. Generate thermal decomposition data and weathering data indoor and outdoor;
4. Develop thermal decomposition models; and
5. Develop weathering models based on the indoor data and validate the model against the outdoor data.

Leveraging previous accelerated weathering efforts at NIST allows for the use of standardized characterization methods for photo-oxidation and mechanical performance. Performance characterization methods that will be used in this Consortium will be selected based on consultation with the participants. The most time consuming aspect of this project is generating the validation data from outdoor exposures. Outdoor exposure of polymeric materials will occur as soon as the materials are identified. NIST's Consortium Manager will work with the Consortium Members to select outdoor locations. A larger number of exposure sites increases the validation of the model predictions for the entire United States. The indoor exposure testing using NIST's existing weathering devices (*i.e.*, SPHERE) will continue throughout the life of the project.

**Participation Process:** NIST is soliciting responses from all sources, including State or local governments, industrial organizations (including corporations, partnerships, and limited partnerships, and industrial development organizations), public and private foundations, and nonprofit organizations (including universities). Interested parties should provide the following information to the NIST Consortium Manager:

- (1) What is your opinion about the objectives of the Consortium and the proposed involvement of your organization in this Consortium?
- (2) Will your organization be capable of contributing the polymeric materials necessary to accomplish the research anticipated by this Consortium?
- (3) What is your opinion on the needs and interest of your organization in participating in this Consortium?
- (4) What technical expertise is your organization capable of providing to the research anticipated by this Consortium (*i.e.*, what are the technical capabilities of the individuals on your organization's project team)?

A responding organization should not include any confidential information in its response to this request for information. NIST will not treat any such information as proprietary. Based on the response received, NIST will decide whether the responding organization is eligible to participate in this Consortium. The eligibility to participate will be based on the following criteria: (1) The rationality and feasibility of the responding organization's proposed involvement in this Consortium; (2) the extent to which the responding organization is capable of contributing its polymer materials and other contributions needed from each member of this Consortium; and (3) the extent to which the responding organization has personnel that has adequate expertise and technical merit to contribute expertise to this Consortium.

NIST has the sole discretion to determine the eligibility of a responding organization to participate in this Consortium. Any responding organization that is debarred from working with the U.S. Government will not be eligible to participate in this Consortium. NIST may contact the responding organization for additional information to determine eligibility. NIST's Technology Partnerships Office will provide eligible parties with the Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) for this Consortium. Each eligible party will be required to execute the Consortium's CRADA prior to participation. Each CRADA will have terms that are identical to the terms of other participants' CRADAs for this Consortium. NIST will require each participant to contribute \$15,000 in annual membership fees for funding the activities under this Consortium. NIST intends to establish the Consortium for a five (5) year period. The terms of the CRADA shall be consistent with the requirements of Title 15, United States Code, Chapter 63, Section 3710a (Cooperative Research and Development Agreements). Although NIST does not guarantee participation in this Consortium or future collaboration, any member of the public is welcome to contact the Technology Partnerships Office with information about NIST-led Consortia or other potential collaborations.

**Kevin A. Kimball,**  
*Chief of Staff.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE458

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska; Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program

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

**ACTION:** Notification of standard prices and fee percentage.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS publishes the standard ex-vessel prices and fee percentage for cost recovery under the Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program. This action is intended to provide participants in a rockfish cooperative with the standard prices and fee percentage for the 2015 fishing year, which was authorized from May 1 through November 15. The fee percentage is 3.0 percent. The fee liability payments were due from each rockfish cooperative by February 15, 2016.

**DATES:** Effective March 1, 2016.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Keeley Kent, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

#### Background

The rockfish fisheries are conducted in Federal waters near Kodiak, AK, by trawl and longline vessels. Regulations implementing the Central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Rockfish Program (Rockfish Program) are set forth at 50 CFR part 679. Exclusive harvesting privileges are allocated as quota share under the Rockfish Program for rockfish primary and secondary species. The rockfish primary species are northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and dusky rockfish. In 2012, dusky rockfish replaced the pelagic shelf rockfish species group in the GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications (77 FR 15194, March 14, 2012). The rockfish secondary species include Pacific cod, rougheye rockfish, shortraker rockfish, sablefish, and thornyhead rockfish. Rockfish cooperatives began fishing under the Rockfish Program on May 1, 2012.

The Rockfish Program is a limited access privilege program established under the provisions of section 303A of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). Sections 303A and 304(d) of the MSA require NMFS to collect fees to recover the actual costs directly related to the management, data collection and

analysis, and enforcement of any limited access privilege program. Therefore, NMFS is required to collect fees for the Rockfish Program under sections 303A and 304(d)(2) of the MSA. Section 304(d)(2) of the MSA also limits the cost recovery fee so that it may not exceed 3 percent of the ex-vessel value of the fish harvested under the Rockfish Program.

**Standard Prices**

NMFS calculates cost recovery fees based on standard ex-vessel value price, rather than actual price data provided by each rockfish cooperative quota (CQ) holder. Use of a standard ex-vessel price is allowed under sections 303A and 304(d)(2) of the MSA. NMFS generates a standard ex-vessel price for each rockfish primary and secondary species on a monthly basis to determine the average price paid per pound for all shoreside processors receiving rockfish primary and secondary species CQ.

Regulations at § 679.85(b)(2) require the Regional Administrator to publish rockfish standard ex-vessel values during the first quarter of each calendar year. The standard prices are described in U.S. dollars per pound for rockfish primary and secondary species CQ landings made during the previous year.

**Fee Percentage**

NMFS assesses a fee on the standard ex-vessel value of rockfish primary species and rockfish secondary species

CQ harvested by rockfish cooperatives in the Central GOA and waters adjacent to the Central GOA when rockfish primary species caught by a cooperative are deducted from the Federal total allowable catch. The rockfish entry level longline fishery and opt-out vessels are not subject to cost recovery fees because those participants do not receive rockfish CQ. Specific details on the Rockfish Program’s cost recovery provision may be found in the implementing regulations set forth at § 679.85.

NMFS informs—by letter—each rockfish cooperative of the fee percentage applied to the previous year’s landings and the total amount due. Fees are due on February 15 of each year. Failure to pay on time will result in the permit holder’s quota share becoming non-transferable and the person will be ineligible to receive any additional quota share by transfer. In addition, cooperative members will not receive any rockfish CQ the following year until full payment of the fee liability is received by NMFS.

NMFS calculates and publishes in the **Federal Register** the fee percentage in the first quarter of each year according to the factors and methods described in Federal regulations at § 679.85(c)(2). NMFS determines the fee percentage that applies to landings made in the previous year by dividing the total Rockfish Program management, data collection and analysis, and

enforcement costs (management costs) during the previous year by the total standard ex-vessel value of the rockfish primary species and rockfish secondary species for all rockfish CQ landings made during the previous year (fishery value). NMFS captures the actual management costs through an established accounting system that allows staff to track labor, travel, contracts, rent, and procurement. Fee collections in any given year may be less than, or greater than, the actual management costs and fishery value for that year, because, by regulation, the fee percentage is established in the first quarter of the calendar year based on the management costs and the fishery value of the previous calendar year.

Using the fee percentage formula described above, the estimated percentage of management costs to value for the 2015 calendar year is 3.3 percent of the standard ex-vessel value; except the rockfish fee percentage amount must not exceed 3.0 percent pursuant to MSA section 304(d)(2)(B). Therefore, the 2015 fee liability percentage is set at 3.0 percent. The fee liability percentage for 2015 remains the same as the 2014 fee liability percentage (80 FR 6053, February 4, 2015). Management costs were similar between 2014 and 2015, with slightly increased costs attributable to software upgrades needed to maintain the catch accounting system.

TABLE 1—STANDARD EX-VESSEL PRICES BY SPECIES FOR THE 2015 ROCKFISH PROGRAM SEASON IN KODIAK, ALASKA

Species	Period ending	Standard ex-vessel price per pound (\$)	
Dusky rockfish *	May 31	0.16	
	June 30	0.18	
	July 31	0.17	
	August 31	0.17	
	September 30	0.17	
	October 31	0.17	
	November 30	0.17	
	Northern rockfish	May 31	0.15
		June 30	0.17
		July 31	0.16
August 31		0.18	
September 30		0.16	
October 31		0.17	
November 30		0.26	
Pacific cod	May 31	0.28	
	June 30	0.27	
	July 31	0.27	
	August 31	0.31	
	September 30	0.27	
	October 31	0.27	
	November 30	0.30	
	Pacific ocean perch	May 31	0.19
June 30		0.19	
July 31		0.18	
August 31		0.17	

TABLE 1—STANDARD EX-VESSEL PRICES BY SPECIES FOR THE 2015 ROCKFISH PROGRAM SEASON IN KODIAK, ALASKA—Continued

Species	Period ending	Standard ex-vessel price per pound (\$)
Rougheye rockfish .....	September 30 .....	0.19
	October 31 .....	0.19
	November 30 .....	0.19
	May 31 .....	0.23
	June 30 .....	0.22
	July 31 .....	0.18
	August 31 .....	0.17
Sablefish .....	September 30 .....	0.15
	October 31 .....	0.15
	November 30 .....	0.17
	May 31 .....	2.63
	June 30 .....	2.68
	July 31 .....	2.76
	August 31 .....	3.57
Shortraker rockfish .....	September 30 .....	2.67
	October 31 .....	4.56
	November 30 .....	2.96
	May 31 .....	0.16
	June 30 .....	0.20
	July 31 .....	0.15
	August 31 .....	0.15
Thornyhead rockfish .....	September 30 .....	0.15
	October 31 .....	0.18
	November 30 .....	0.17
	May 31 .....	0.31
	June 30 .....	0.35
	July 31 .....	0.35
	August 31 .....	0.40
	September 30 .....	0.33
	October 31 .....	0.59
	November 30 .....	0.67

\* The pelagic shelf rockfish (PSR) species group has been changed to “dusky rockfish.”

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

Dated: February 25, 2016.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648–XE298

#### Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permit

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

**ACTION:** Notice; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Regional Administrator, NMFS West Coast Region, has determined that an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) warrants further consideration and requests public comment on the application. The application requests a 2-year exemption from prohibitions under the Fishery Management Plan for U.S. West Coast Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species (HMS FMP) to test the effects and efficacy of using modified drift gillnet (DGN) gear to fish for swordfish and other highly migratory species (HMS) off the U.S. West Coast in the Pacific Leatherback Conservation Area (PLCA) when environmental conditions are favorable during the PLCA closure period.

**DATES:** Comments must be submitted in writing by March 31, 2016.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2015–0063, by any of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to

[www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2015-0063](http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2015-0063), click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. EFP applications will be available under Relevant Documents through the same link.

- *Mail:* Attn: Chris Fanning, NMFS West Coast Region, 501 W. Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802. Include the identifier “NOAA–NMFS–2015–0063” in the comments.

*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 [www.regulations.gov](http://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