

Council Motion
C3c - Pelagic Trawl Gear Definition
June 8, 2025

The Council recommends final action to revise the definition of pelagic trawl gear and adopts the following as its preferred alternative. This action deals solely with clarifying the regulatory definition of the components of pelagic trawl gear to allow the continued use and innovation of bycatch excluder devices, instrumentation necessary to monitor net performance, and remove unnecessary outdated text per the Purpose and Need statement. The Council is separately considering the performance of pelagic trawl gear, pelagic trawl gear innovation, and potential associated action.

Alternative 2: Revise the regulations that define and limit components of pelagic trawl gear, incorporating specific elements from Options 1-5 from the analysis. Elements in the No Action alternative (Alternative 1) that are not explicitly changed below would remain in the regulations.

Revise the definition of pelagic trawl gear to read as follows:

Pelagic trawl gear means a trawl that has no discs, bobbins, or rollers and has no chafe protection gear attached to the footrope or fishing line.

Modify the following limits on pelagic trawl gear:

- Remove outdated text related to parallel line trawls.
- Remove limits on use of flotation.
- Remove reference to metallic components.
- Prohibit the use of metal chains aft of the fishing circle and forward of 15 inch stretched mesh, other than short lengths of chain used to prevent twisting.

Additionally, clarify that the following components are not limited on pelagic trawl gear:

- Pelagic trawl gear limitations do not apply to the codend.
- Allow bycatch excluder devices.
- Allow sensors and other types of electronic or mechanical instruments that are capable of observing and/or monitoring the fishing gear, catch, fishing activity, or fishing environment (including seafloor clearance) to be attached to pelagic trawl gear. 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. Allow small mesh panels and connectors used to attach instruments to pelagic trawl gear.

The Council deems proposed regulations that clearly and directly flow from the provisions of this motion to be necessary and appropriate in accordance with section 303(c).

The Council authorizes the Executive Director and the Chairman to review the draft proposed regulations when provided by NMFS to ensure that the proposed regulations

to be submitted to the Secretary under section 303(c) are consistent with these instructions.