

Council Motion
E-1 Staff Tasking
June 11, 2024

The Council initiates a regulatory amendment with the following purpose and need statement and alternatives:

With the implementation of electronic monitoring for pelagic trawl fisheries (trawl EM), NMFS will require vessels to retain and deliver all catch and exempt vessels from the prohibition on retaining catch above maximum retainable amounts (MRAs), to reduce regulatory discards and improve catch accounting. NMFS will continue to use MRA calculations to determine directed fishing to ensure compliance with other fishery regulations. Currently, Pacific ocean perch (POP) catch in the pelagic trawl fisheries accrues towards the aggregated rockfish category MRA of 5%. The combination of the new requirement to retain all catch in the trawl EM program and increasing POP biomass necessitates evaluating the current regulations to resolve unintended consequences that may result from the retention, MRA, and directed fishing requirements.

Alternative 1. No action

Alternative 2. Remove POP from the aggregated rockfish category for pollock targets and establish a separate POP MRA for calculation of directed fishing that reflects the intrinsic rate of POP bycatch in pollock fisheries under regulations at 50 CFR 679.20(e) and Table 10 to part 679.

Alternative 3. Revise the definition of directed fishing at 50 CFR 679.2 for vessels participating in the pelagic trawl EM program such that vessels deploying pelagic trawl gear are directed fishing for pollock if the amount of pollock is 80% or greater of total catch.