

Council Motion
C6 - Pelagic Trawl Gear Definition Changes
October 6, 2024

The Council adopts the following revised purpose and need statement and list of alternatives for analysis.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to update the regulatory definition of pelagic trawls in Alaska to clearly allow commonly used components in codends and bycatch excluder devices, allow instrumentation necessary to monitor and adjust net performance, and remove unnecessary outdated text. The definition of pelagic trawl gear within 50 CFR 679.2 has remained unchanged since 1993. Clarifying the definition of pelagic trawl gear will also facilitate the process to incentivize trawl gear innovation or other measures to minimize the impacts of pelagic trawl gear on bycatch, sensitive habitat, and unobserved mortality.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: No Action (Status quo).

Alternative 2: Revise the definition of pelagic trawl gear to:

Option 1. Specify that the limitations on flotation and metallic components are not applicable to the codend.

Option 2. Remove outdated text related to parallel line trawls.

Option 3. Allow the use of flotation aft of:
Suboption 1: 5.5 inch stretched mesh, or
Suboption 2: 15 inch stretched mesh.

Option 4. Allow instruments capable of observing, monitoring, or adjusting the fishing gear, catch, fishing activity, or fishing environment (including seafloor clearance) to be attached to pelagic trawl gear. Floats, capable of providing up to 100 lb (45.3 kg) of buoyancy, may be attached to or within 6 feet of each instrument.

Option 5. Allow the use of metallic components in the following locations:
Suboption 1: Forward of the fishing circle.
Suboption 2: Aft of the fishing circle and forward of:
a) 5.5 inch stretched mesh, or
b) 15 inch stretched mesh.
Suboption 3: Aft of:
a) 5.5 inch stretched mesh, or
b) 15 inch stretched mesh.