

Council Motion
D1 - Pelagic Trawl Gear Definition Changes
February 11, 2024

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

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to align regulations with the longstanding interpretation of pelagic trawl gear in Alaska and to remove unnecessary outdated text. Pelagic Trawl gear is defined within 50 CFR 679.2 and has remained unchanged since 1993. The Council and NMFS did not intend the codend to be included within the restrictive definition of pelagic trawl gear specified at § 679.2. However, the national definition of the codend at § 600.10 is inconsistent with the § 679.2 definition because it includes the codend as part of the trawl net. A regulatory change to the trawl gear definition at § 679.2 is needed to exclude the codend, thereby better reflecting the original intent and providing for improved regulatory compliance. Revisions are also needed to the pelagic trawl gear definition in paragraph 14 of the definition of authorized fishing gear at § 679.2 to remove outdated text related to parallel line trawls and to allow for flotation within bycatch excluder devices.

Alternatives

Alternative 1: No Action (Status quo).

Alternative 2: Revise regulations at 50 CFR 679.2 that define authorized fishing gear for pelagic trawl gear and trawl gear to:

Option 1. Exclude the codend from limitations applicable to the trawl net.

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 Remove outdated text related to parallel line trawls.

Option 3. Allow the use of flotation for bycatch excluder devices.

Option 4. Allow hardware that secures technology to the trawl as long as the hardware does not appreciably change the intended performance of the trawl. Technology that may need to be secured to the trawl includes live-feed cameras, flow sensors, etc.

(These options are not mutually exclusive.)