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NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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C1 Gulf of Alaska Pacific Cod Harvest Specifications

February 2026 Council Meeting

Action Memo

Council Staff: Sara Cleaver

Other Presenters: Dr. Pete Hulson (NMFS AFSC), Dr. Jim Ianelli (NMFS AFSC, GOA Plan Team co-chair)

Action Required:

1. Review Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Pacific cod assessment and GOA Groundfish Plan Team report.
2. Recommend GOA Pacific cod harvest specifications for 2026 and 2027, including:
 - Overfishing level (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC).
 - Total Allowable Catch (TAC), taking into account State waters fisheries. (Council only)
 - Pacific halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limits and apportionments in the other hook-and-line fishery category. (Council only)

BACKGROUND

At this meeting, the Council will review the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Pacific cod stock assessment and make final recommendations on GOA Pacific cod harvest specifications and halibut PSC limits for hook-and-line fisheries in the other hook-and-line fishery category for the 2026 and 2027 fisheries. The Council made [final recommendations for 2026 and 2027](#) during the GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications agenda item at the December 2025 Council meeting. Additionally, the Council [requested](#) staff bring back information on whether an updated Pacific cod assessment, with inclusion of 2025 survey data, would be feasible, and whether harvest specifications for this stock could be updated partway through the 2026 fishing year. The reason for this request was the increase in the recent trawl survey biomass estimates for Pacific cod, which is a core species for GOA groundfish fisheries utilized by every fishing sector and benefits many communities. Staff at the AFSC have been able to accommodate this request on a shortened timeframe and the assessment and associated documentation were reviewed by the GOA Groundfish Plan Team at a special meeting in January.

If the Council recommends revised harvest specifications that differ from those recommended in December 2025, NMFS will publish an inseason adjustment to Pacific cod subarea TACs and subsequent sector apportionments and seasonal allowances as soon as practicable. NMFS also intends to include these specifications in the 2026/27 final harvest specifications for GOA which need to publish before March 17, when the 2025/26 final harvest specifications for GOA expire. Upon publication in the Federal Register, the 2026/2027 final harvest specifications for GOA Pacific cod will replace the 2025/2026 final harvest specifications and any inseason adjustments published in 2026.

GOA Pacific cod assessment, associated documents, and harvest specifications

The GOA Groundfish Plan Team met in a hybrid format over Zoom and at the Alaska Fishery Science Center on January 21st. At that meeting the Team reviewed: An abbreviated GOA Ecosystem Status Report (ESR), which provides information on ecosystem status and trends as context for the assessment and harvest specifications; the GOA Pacific cod update assessment; updates to the Pacific cod Ecosystem and Socioeconomic Profile (ESP), and the associated ESP Report card. The GOA Groundfish Plan Team Report is embedded within the [Joint Groundfish Plan Team Report](#), linked on the eAgenda. Final GOA Pacific cod OFLs and ABCs specified for 2025, and the Plan Team’s recommendations for 2026 and 2027 are as follows:

Table 1. Plan Team Recommended GOA Pacific cod OFLs and ABCs for 2026 and 2027, with spatial apportionments across GOA regulatory areas. Specifications for the 2025 fishing year (recommended by the Council in December 2024) included for reference.

	2025			2026			2027		
OFL (t)	38,688			49,782			38,812		
ABC (t)	32,141			41,520			32,209		
Apportionments by area	Western	Central	Eastern	Western	Central	Eastern	Western	Central	Eastern
	8,710	20,506	2,925	10,297	28,732	2,491	7,987	22,289	1,933

The SSC recommendations will be provided to the Council during the meeting; this agenda item is not scheduled at the AP.

TAC considerations for State waters Pacific cod fisheries

The Council will need to recommend Pacific cod TACs for the GOA that are a 25% (Central and Eastern GOA) to 35% (Western GOA) reduction from ABC to account for State GHL fisheries. As a reminder, in December 2025 the Council’s recommended TACs accounted for the increase in the state-waters South Alaska Peninsula Pacific cod fishery GHL from 30% to 35% of the WGOA ABC due to Board of Fisheries action in October 2025. Established area apportionments for 2026 and 2027 adjust the amount of Pacific cod ABC available for the Federal TAC in each area and reflect this change. These adjustments are listed in Table 2. These values are based on the Plan Team recommendations for ABCs/OFLs (as indicated in Table 1) and spatial apportionments if the Council were to set GOA Pacific cod TACs at the maximum amount permissible. These may change when the SSC and Council make final recommendations.

Note: Tables 2 and 3 are exclusive to this memo and the ABC, GHL, and Federal TAC for Pacific cod will be described in text in the final rule for harvest specifications.

Table 2. Final 2026 GOA Pacific cod apportionments of ABC, TACs, and State GHLs (mt)

Specifications	Western	Central	Eastern	Total
ABC	10,297	28,732	2,491	41,520
State GHL	3,604	7,183	623	11,410
(%)	35%	25%	25%	-
Federal TAC	6,693	21,549	1,868	30,110

Table 3. Final 2027 GOA Pacific cod ABCs, TACs, and State GHGs (mt)

Specifications	Western	Central	Eastern	Total
ABC	7,987	22,289	1,933	32,209
State GHG	2,795	5,572	483	8,851
(%)	35%	25%	25%	-
Federal TAC	5,192	16,717	1,450	23,358

Halibut Prohibited Species Catch Limits- Pacific cod fisheries

In the GOA, PSC limits for halibut are specified annually by fishery, gear, and season. The Council already specified the PSC limits, allowances, and apportionments for trawl and hook-and-line gear and the apportionment of those limits for trawl gear deep-water species and shallow-water species fishery categories. However, regulation at § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) requires that catcher vessels (CV) and catcher processors (CP) using hook-and-line gear in the other hook-and-line fishery category be apportioned halibut in proportion to the total Western and Central Pacific cod allocations. If harvest specifications are revised from December 2025 based on the Plan Team’s recommendations, this information must be specified again, described below.

Halibut PSC limit CV-CP hook-and-line split

The hook-and-line halibut PSC limit is divided between the CV and CP sectors according to the “GOA Pacific cod split formula” that is prescribed in regulation at § 679.21(d)(2). Based on this formula, the Plan Team’s ABC recommendation, and subsequent TAC if the Council sets TAC at the maximum level, the hook-and-line CV sector would be apportioned a 163 mt halibut PSC limit and the hook-and-line CP sector would be apportioned a 92 mt PSC limit in 2026 and 2027. The demersal shelf rockfish fishery halibut PSC limit would remain at 9 mt. The seasonal percentages in Table 4 are based on past Council action.

Table 4. Final 2026 and 2027 Apportionments of the “Other hook-and-line fisheries” Halibut PSC Allowance Between the Hook-and-Line Gear Catcher Vessel and Catcher/Processor Sectors [Values are in metric tons]. Will correspond to Tables 15 in the final harvest specifications (anticipated publication in 2026).

“Other than DSR” allowance	Hook-and-line sector	Sector annual amount	Season	Seasonal percentage	Sector seasonal amount
255	CV	163	A	86%	140
			B	2%	3
			C	12%	20
	CP	92	A	86%	79
			B	2%	2
			C	12%	11