



## NOAA FISHERIES

### Sustainable Fisheries

National Marine Fisheries  
Service, West Coast Region

7600 Sand Point Way NE,  
Seattle, WA 98115

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/west-coast>

### *Groundfish e-mail group*

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## PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY

### Vessel Movement, Monitoring, and Declaration Management

The final rule regarding Vessel Movement, Monitoring, and Declaration Management measures to the Pacific groundfish fishery published on June 11, 2020. This rule makes changes to existing management measures, which are explained below.

Regulations contained in this rule are effective July 13, 2020, except for the amendments to Sec. 660.14, which are effective September 9, 2020. The full rule can be found at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/regulatory-revisions-vessel-movement-monitoring-and-declaration-management-pacific-coast-0>

#### **For more information contact:**

Groundfish Branch (206) 526-6140

Fisheries Permit Office (206) 526-4353

Vessel Monitoring System Program Manager (888) 585-5518

West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (866) 780-8064

## What's Changing July 13, 2020

	Old Requirement/Prohibition	New Requirement
<b>Amendment to the definition of Continuous Transit</b>	<i>Continuous transiting or transit through</i> means that a vessel crosses a groundfish conservation area or essential fish habitat conservation areas on a heading, along a continuous straight line course, while making way by means of a source of power at all times, other than drifting by means of the prevailing water current or weather conditions.	<i>Continuous transiting or transit through</i> means that a vessel crosses a groundfish conservation area or essential fish habitat conservation areas on a heading as nearly as practicable to a direct route, consistent with navigational safety, while maintaining expeditious headway throughout the transit without loitering or delay.
<b>At sea declarations</b>	<p>Midwater catcher trawl vessels participating in the Pacific whiting fishery were restricted to landing either at a mothership or shoreside processor.</p> <p>After Pacific whiting catcher vessels had made their delivery obligation to a mothership, they were not allowed to make a tow for a delivery to a shoreside processor without returning to port first.</p>	<p>After a vessel offloads onto a mothership, it can <b>immediately</b> change its declaration from one of the “Pacific whiting mothership sector” declarations to one of the “Pacific whiting shorebased IFQ” declarations to make a tow and offload on shore, or vice versa.</p> <p>To change your declaration, contact NMFS OLE at 888-585-5518.</p>
<b>Gear testing</b>	Groundfish vessels participating in the Shorebased IFQ Program, the Mothership (MS) Coop Program, or the Catcher/processor (C/P) Coop Program were required to have 100 percent observer coverage when fishing including gear testing.	<p>Groundfish vessels participating in the Shorebased IFQ, Mothership (MS), and Catcher-Processor (C/P) sectors are <b>exempt</b> from the requirement to carry an observer while testing gear.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be exempted from observer coverage while testing gear or equipment, vessels need to notify both West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP; 866-780-8064) and NMFS OLE (888-585-5518) at least 48 hours prior to departing from a trip and are required to use the declaration “gear testing.”</li> </ul>

## What's Changing July 19, 2020 Continued

	Old Requirement/Prohibition	New Requirement
<b>Movement of IFQ pot gear</b>	Vessels fishing in the shorebased IFQ program using fixed gear ( <i>i.e.</i> , pot gear) were prohibited from moving gear from one management area to another during a single trip.	Shorebased IFQ fixed gear vessels retrieving pots from one management area can retain their catch on board and move to a second management area to deploy pots. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These pots may be either baited or not baited.</li> <li>• The vessel can then return to port to deliver their fish, then return to retrieve their pots from the second management area.</li> </ul>

## Frequently Asked Questions

### At Sea Declarations

#### When do I make a new declaration?

Vessels will need to make a declaration before their first trip and then immediately after they make their delivery to the mothership by calling NMFS OLE at 888-585-5518. When calling please provide your vessel identification number, five digit vessel passcode, and two digit gear code. Then record the confirmation before disconnecting from the line.

#### If I know that I will be changing my declaration, can I make more than one declaration before I depart on my first trip?

No. You are only allowed to make one declaration at a time. You must wait until you have delivered to the mothership before you can change your declaration.

### Gear Testing

#### How do I contact WCGOP and the VMS Program to tell them I'd like to test gear?

You can contact WCGOP by calling 866-780-8064 and the VMS Program by calling 888-585-5518. When calling, please use the declaration "gear testing," and the gear code 70A.

### Movement of IFQ pot gear

#### Do I need to document that I moved fixed gear from one IFQ management area to another?

No. There are no changes to your recordkeeping and reporting requirements

## What's Changing September 9, 2020

This section applies to vessels participating in the limited entry groundfish fishery (limited entry “A” endorsed permit), any vessels using non-groundfish trawl gear (such as ridgeback prawn, California halibut, and sea cucumber trawl) in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and any vessels that use open access gear ([50 CFR 660.11](#)) to take and retain or possess groundfish in the EEZ or land groundfish taken in the EEZ (including salmon troll, prawn trap, Dungeness crab, halibut longline, California halibut line gear, and sheephead trap).

	Old Requirement/Prohibition	New Requirement
<b>Position transmission rate for groundfish VMS</b>	VMS units transmit a vessel’s position once every hour, 24 hours a day throughout the fishing year. Less frequent position reporting, at least once every four hours, may be authorized when a vessel has temporarily paused participation in the fishery and remains in port for an extended period of time.	This action increases the position transmission rate to every 15 minutes per hour for groundfish vessels required to use NMFS type-approved VMS units (some exemptions exist, see below for more information on exemptions).
<b>Electronic monitoring exemption for transmission rate</b>	No previous requirement/prohibition.	If a vessel has an electronic monitoring system installed and in use for the duration of a given fishing year, the mobile transceiver unit must transmit a signal at least once every hour.
<b>Midwater trawl exemption for transmission rate</b>	No previous requirement/prohibition.	If a limited entry trawl vessel is fishing with midwater trawl gear, the mobile transceiver unit must transmit a signal at least once every hour.
<b>In port exemption for transmission rate</b>	No previous requirement/prohibition.	If a vessel remains in port for an extended period of time, the mobile transceiver unit must transmit a signal at least once every four hours.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Vessel Monitoring Systems

#### **I do not retain incidentally caught groundfish, does this rule apply to me?**

No. If vessels using open access gear do not take or retain, or possess groundfish, or land groundfish taken in the EEZ, then these vessels are not subject to the increased transmission rate.

#### **When I am in port, can I reduce my transmission rate to every 4 hours?**

Yes. If a vessel remains in port for an extended period of time, the transmission rate can be reduced to at least once every four hours.

#### **How do I request an exemption from transmitting every 15 minutes?**

For an exemption report to be valid, it must be received by NMFS OLE at least 2 hours and not more than 24 hours before the exempted activities occur. If you meet the exemption criteria you can make a request by contacting NMFS OLE at (888)585-5518.

#### **I am a limited entry vessel operator, how do I change my transmission rate?**

Vessel operators are allowed to change their transmission rates on a trip-by-trip basis when they meet one of the exemption criteria. To change your transmission rate, contact your VMS service provider.

#### **Who can I talk to if I have more questions?**

Please direct any questions on this rule or any other to the NMFS West Coast Region Groundfish Branch at (206) 526-6140 or visit the West Coast Groundfish website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/west-coast-groundfish>.