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PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERY

EMERGENCY ACTION TO TEMPORARILY REMOVE SEASONAL PROCESSING LIMITATIONS FOR PACIFIC WHITING MOTHERSHIPS AND CATCHER-PROCESSORS

This emergency rule temporarily allows at-sea Pacific whiting processing platforms to operate as both a mothership and a catcher-processor during the 2020 Pacific whiting fishery. This action is necessary to ensure catcher vessels in the mothership cooperative sector are able to fully harvest sector allocations. Emergency measures under this rule will allow catcher-processors to operate as motherships later in the year, and replace mothership processing platforms that have chosen not to operate in the cooperative in response to high economic uncertainty in 2020.

Regulations contained in this rule are effective for 180 days, from June 19, 2020, to December 16, 2020.

The full emergency rule can be found at:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/06/19/2020-13288/fisheries-off-west-coast-states-emergency-action-to-temporarily-remove-seasonal-processing>

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Requirements to Operate a Vessel as Both a Mothership and Catcher-Processor in the 2020 At-sea Pacific Whiting Season

This emergency action removes restrictions prohibiting an at-sea Pacific whiting processing platform from operating as a mothership (MS) or catcher-processor(C/P) in the same calendar year. For 180 days, this action temporarily allows a processing platform to operate as both an MS and C/P in the same calendar year, but not on the same trip. To operate as both an MS and C/P in the same calendar year, the necessary permits must be registered to the vessel, and a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) declaration must be made prior to each trip.

Owners of processing platforms that intend to switch between C/P and MS operations during the 2020 Pacific whiting season must follow this procedure:

1) Submit a request to register for both processing permits.

The vessel may be registered under both an MS permit and a C/P endorsed permit simultaneously for the duration of the emergency rule. The owner of a processing platform currently registered under a C/P endorsed permit (or MS permit) may also operate as an MS (or C/P) by submitting a request to NMFS Permits to register the processing platform under a valid MS permit (or C/P endorsed permit) per regulations in 50 CFR 660.25(b).

2) Submit a notification of a material change to coop agreement within 7 days.

To operate as an MS, the vessel must be included in the MS coop agreement. To operate in the C/P fishery (*i.e.*, catch and process 2020 C/P sector allocations at-sea) the vessel must be

included in the C/P coop agreement. Within 7 calendar days of the new processing platform operating for the first time in either the 2020 MS coop fishery or the 2020 C/P coop fishery, the respective coop manager must notify NMFS in writing of such change to the coop agreement as required in regulations at 50 CFR 660.150 (d)(1)(iii)(B)(4) and 50 CFR 660.160(d)(1)(iii)(B)(4).

3) *Submit a revised coop agreement within 30 days of material change to the coop agreement.*

Within 30 days of a new vessel participating in a coop fishery, the MS or C/P coop manager must submit a revised coop agreement to NMFS that lists all vessels and/or processing platforms operating in the respective coop and includes the new processing platform, along with a letter describing the change to the coop agreement, as required in regulations at 50 CFR 660.150 (d)(1)(iii)(B)(4) and 50 CFR 660.160(d)(1)(iii)(B)(4)

4) *Change vessel declaration before each fishing trip.*

For each trip, the vessel must update its VMS declaration to reflect its activity for that trip prior to departure as specified in existing groundfish regulations at 50 CFR 660.13(d)(4)(iv)(A). The declaration is binding for the duration of the trip and may not be changed until completion of the trip. A processing platform must submit one of the following declarations: a) Limited entry midwater trawl, Pacific whiting catcher/processor sector; or b) Limited entry midwater trawl, Pacific whiting mothership sector (mothership).

