

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

William Fritz, (301) 427-8078.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**I. Background**

Sections 312(b) through (e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1861a (b) through (e)) generally authorizes fishing capacity reduction programs. In particular, section 312(d) authorizes industry fee systems for repaying reduction loans that finance reduction programs. Subpart L of 50 CFR part 600 is the framework rule generally implementing section 312(b) through (e). Sections 1111 and 1112 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1279f and 1279g) generally authorizes reduction loans.

Enacted on February 20, 2003, section 212 of division B, title II, of Public Law 108-7 (section 212) specifically authorizes a fishing capacity reduction program for that portion of the limited entry trawl fishery under the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan whose permits, excluding those registered to whiting catcher-processors, are endorsed for trawl gear operation (reduction fishery).

The reduction program's objective was to reduce the number of vessels and permits endorsed for the operation of groundfish trawl gear. The program also involved corollary fishing capacity reduction in the California, Oregon, and Washington fisheries for Dungeness crab and pink shrimp and the sub-loans for these State fisheries have all been repaid.

NMFS proposed the implementing notice on May 28, 2003 (68 FR 31653) and published the final notice on July 18, 2003 (68 FR 42613). NMFS allocated a \$28,428,719 reduction loan to the groundfish fishery. The allocation became a reduction loan repayable by fees from the groundfish fishery.

NMFS published in the **Federal Register** on July 13, 2005 (70 FR 40225), the final rule to implement the industry fee system for repaying the program's reduction loan. The regulations implementing the program are located at 50 CFR part 600 subpart M. On August 8, 2005, NMFS published in the **Federal Register** (70 FR 45695) a notice of the fee effective date and established September 8, 2005 as the effective date when fee collection and loan repayment began.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this notice is to adjust, in accordance with the framework rule's § 600.1013(b), the fee rate for the groundfish fishery. Section 600.1013(b) directs NMFS to recalculate the fee rate

that will be reasonably necessary to ensure reduction loan repayment within the specified 30-year term. NMFS has determined that the current fee rate of 3.5 percent for the groundfish fishery is projected to collect more than the annual amortization amount needed for 2025. Therefore, NMFS is decreasing the fee rate to 2.25 percent for all landings beginning January 1, 2025.

Fish buyers may continue to disburse collected fee deposits to NMFS by using <https://www.pay.gov> or by mailing payments to our lockbox. Our lockbox's address is: "NMFS Pacific Coast Groundfish Buyback Loan, P.O. Box 979008, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000. Fish buyers must include the fee collection report with the fee payment. Fish buyers using <https://www.pay.gov> will find an electronic fee collection report form. Fish buyers not using <https://www.pay.gov> may also access the NMFS website for a copy of the fee collection report at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/pacific-coast-groundfish-buyback>.

III. Notice

The new 2.25 percent fee rate for the groundfish fishery will begin for all landings starting January 1, 2025. From and after this date, all groundfish program fish sellers paying fees shall begin paying groundfish program fees at the revised rate. The first due date for fee payments with the decreased rate will be February 14, 2025.

Fee collection and submission shall follow previously established methods in § 600.1013 of the framework rule and in the final fee rule published in the **Federal Register** on July 13, 2005 (70 FR 40225).

Authority: The authority for this action is Pub. L. 107 206, Pub. L. 108 7, 16 U.S.C. 1861a (b) through (e), and 50 CFR 600.1000 *et seq.*

Dated: November 22, 2024.

Brian T. Pawlak,

Chief Financial Officer/Chief Administrative Officer, Director, Office of Management and Budget, NOAA Fisheries.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

[RTID 0648-XE485]

Fishing Capacity Reduction Program for the Longline Catcher Processor Subsector of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Non-Pollock Groundfish Fishery

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of fee rate adjustment.

SUMMARY: NMFS issues this notice to inform the public that there will be a decrease of the fee rate required to repay the reduction loan financing the non-pollock groundfish fishing capacity reduction program. Effective January 1, 2025, NMFS is decreasing the Loan A fee rate to \$0.016 per pound to ensure timely repayment of the loan. The fee rate for Loan B will remain unchanged at \$0.001 per pound. The decreased fee rate is due to a recalculation based on the required amortization target and projected non-pollock groundfish Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for 2025, as well as a temporary adjustment related to 2024 Season B.

DATES: The non-pollock groundfish program fee rate decrease will begin with landings on January 1, 2025. The first due date for fee payments with the decreased rate will be February 15, 2025.

ADDRESSES: Send questions about this notice to William Fritz, Financial Assistance Specialist, Financial Services Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: William Fritz, (301) 427-8078.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Sections 312(b)-(e) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1861 *et seq.*) generally authorizes fishing capacity reduction programs. In particular, section 312(d) authorizes industry fee systems for repaying reduction loans which finance reduction program costs. Subpart L of 50 CFR part 600 is the framework rule generally implementing section 312(b)-(e). Sections 1111 and 1112 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1279f and 1279g) generally authorize reduction loans.

Enacted on December 8, 2004, section 219, Title II, of FY 2005 Appropriations

Act, Public Law 104-447 (Act) authorizes a fishing capacity reduction program implementing capacity reduction plans submitted to NMFS by catcher processor subsectors of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) non-pollock groundfish fishery (reduction fishery) as set forth in the Act.

The longline catcher processor subsector (Longline Subsector) is among the catcher processor subsectors eligible to submit to NMFS a capacity reduction plan under the terms of the Act. The longline subsector non-pollock groundfish reduction program's objective was to reduce the number of vessels and permits endorsed for longline subsector of the non-pollock groundfish fishery. All post-reduction fish landings from the reduction fishery are subject to the longline subsector non-pollock groundfish program's fee.

NMFS proposed the implementing notice on August 11, 2006 (71 FR 46364), and published the final notice on September 29, 2006 (71 FR 57696). NMFS allocated the \$35,000,000 reduction loan (A Loan) to the reduction fishery and this loan is repayable by fees from the fishery.

On September 24, 2007, NMFS published in the **Federal Register** (72 FR 54219), the final rule to implement the industry fee system for repaying the non-pollock groundfish program's reduction loan and established October 24, 2007, as the effective date when fee collection and loan repayment began. The regulations implementing the program are located at § 600.1012.

NMFS published a final rule to implement a second \$2,700,000 reduction loan (B Loan) for this fishery in the **Federal Register** on September 24, 2012 (77 FR 58775). The loan was disbursed December 18, 2012 with fee collection of \$0.001 per pound to begin January 1, 2013. This fee is in addition to the A Loan fee.

Purpose

The purpose of this notice is to adjust the fee rate for the reduction fishery in accordance with the framework rule's § 600.1013(b). Section 600.1013(b) directs NMFS to recalculate the fee rate that will be reasonably necessary to ensure reduction loan repayment within the specified 30 year term.

NMFS has determined for the reduction fishery that the current fee rate of Loan A, \$0.020 per pound, is more than that needed to service the loan in 2025. Therefore, NMFS is decreasing the Loan A fee rate to \$0.016 per pound. NMFS has determined \$0.017 per pound is sufficient to ensure timely loan repayment, with an

additional temporary \$0.001 per pound adjustment related to the 2024 Season B rate having been set at \$0.020 per pound rather than \$0.019 per pound. The fee rate for Loan B will remain \$0.001 per pound.

Subsector members may continue to use *Pay.gov* to disburse collected fee deposits at: <https://www.pay.gov/paygov/>.

Please visit the NMFS website for additional information at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/funding-and-financial-services/longline-catcher-processor-subsector-bering-sea-and-aleutian-islands-non-pollock>.

Notice

The new fee rate for the non-pollock groundfish fishery will begin on January 1, 2025.

From and after this date, all subsector members paying fees on the non-pollock groundfish fishery shall begin paying non-pollock groundfish fishery program fees at the revised rate.

Fee collection and submission shall follow previously established methods in § 600.1013 of the framework rule and in the final fee rule published in the **Federal Register** on September 24, 2007 (72 FR 54219).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1861 *et seq.*; Pub. L. 108-447.

Dated: November 26, 2024.

Brian T. Pawlak,

Chief Financial Officer/Chief Administrative Officer, Director, Office of Management and Budget, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XE341]

Takes of Marine Mammals Incidental to Specified Activities; Taking Marine Mammals Incidental to the Maryland Offshore Wind Project Offshore of Maryland

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; issuance of Letter of Authorization.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) as amended, and implementing regulations, notification is hereby given that a Letter of Authorization (LOA) has been issued to US Wind, Inc. (US Wind), for the taking of marine

mammals incidental to the construction of the Maryland Offshore Wind Project (hereafter known as the "Project").

DATES: The LOA is effective from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2029.

ADDRESSES: The LOA and supporting documentation are available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/incidental-take-authorizations-under-marine-mammal-protection-act>. In case of problems accessing these documents, please call the contact listed below (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jessica Taylor, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, (301) 427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The MMPA prohibits the "take" of marine mammals, with certain exceptions. Sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) direct the Secretary of Commerce (as delegated to NMFS) to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region if certain findings are made, regulations are promulgated (when applicable), and public notice and an opportunity for public comment are provided.

An authorization for incidental takings shall be granted if NMFS finds that the taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s) and will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for taking for subsistence uses (where relevant). If such findings are made, NMFS must prescribe the permissible methods of taking; "other means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact" on the affected species or stocks and their habitat, paying particular attention to rookeries, mating grounds, and areas of similar significance, and on the availability of the species or stocks for taking for certain subsistence uses (referred to as "mitigation"); and requirements pertaining to the monitoring and reporting of such takings. The MMPA defines "take" to mean harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal (16 U.S.C. 1362(13); 50 CFR 216.103). Level A harassment is defined as any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild (16 U.S.C. 1362(18); 50 CFR 216.3). Level A harassment is defined as any act of