

for vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the BS was established by the Final 1996 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish (61 FR 4311, February 5, 1996) as 295,864 metric tons (mt).

The Director, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Director), has determined in accordance with § 675.20(a)(8), that the first seasonal allowance of pollock TAC for vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the BS soon will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Director has established a directed fishing allowance of 273,864 mt with consideration that 22,000 mt will be taken as incidental catch in directed fishing for other species in the BS. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the BS. This closure is effective 12 noon, February 26, 1996, until 12 noon, A.l.t., April 15, 1996. Under § 675.20(a)(2)(ii), the second seasonal allowance will become available 12 noon, A.l.t., August 15 through the end of the fishing year.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts for applicable gear types may be found in the regulations at § 675.20(h).

#### Classification

This action is taken under § 675.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 23, 1996.

Donald J. Leedy,

*Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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#### 50 CFR Part 675

[Docket No. 960129019-6019-01; I.D. 022396D]

#### Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area; Species in the Rock Sole/Flathead Sole/"Other Flatfish" Fishery Category by Vessels Using Trawl Gear

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

**ACTION:** Closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is closing the directed fishery for species in the rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category by vessels using trawl gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the first seasonal bycatch allowance of Pacific halibut apportioned to the trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category in the BSAI.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 12 noon, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 26, 1996, until 12 noon, A.l.t., April 1, 1996.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew N. Smoker, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by

regulations implementing the FMP at 50 CFR parts 620 and 675.

The first seasonal bycatch allowance of Pacific halibut for the BSAI trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category, which is defined at § 675.21(b)(1)(iii)(B)(2), was established by the Final 1996 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish (61 FR 4311, February 5, 1996) as 453 metric tons.

The Director, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined, in accordance with § 675.21(c)(1)(iii), that the first seasonal bycatch allowance of Pacific halibut apportioned to the trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery in the BSAI has been caught. Therefore, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for species in the rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category by vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts for applicable gear types may be found in the regulations at § 675.20(h).

#### Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 675.21 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 23, 1996.

Donald J. Leedy,

*Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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