

(End of clause)

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 672**

[Docket No. 960129018-6018-01; I.D. 031296E]

Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska; Pacific Cod for Processing by the Offshore Component

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is closing the directed fishery for Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the allocation of Pacific cod for the offshore component in the Central Regulatory Area.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 12 noon, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 13, 1996, until 12 midnight, A.l.t., December 31, 1996.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (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 672.

In accordance with § 672.20(c)(1)(ii)(B), the allocation of Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Central Regulatory Area was established by the Final 1996 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish (61 FR 4304, February 5, 1996) as 4,290 metric tons (mt).

The Director, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Director), has determined, in accordance with § 672.20(c)(2)(ii), that the allocation of Pacific cod total allowable catch for processing by the offshore component in the Central

Regulatory Area soon will be reached. The Regional Director established a directed fishing allowance of 3,290 mt, with consideration that 1,000 mt will be taken as incidental catch in directed fishing for other species in the Central Regulatory Area. The Regional Director has determined that the directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Central Regulatory Area.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts for applicable gear types may be found in the regulations at § 672.20(g).

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 672.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 12, 1996.

Richard W. Surdi,

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

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