

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR 679.21 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 20, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 97-7715 Filed 3-21-97; 4:50 pm]

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50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961107312-7021-02; I.D. 032497A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the Central Aleutian District of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is closing directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Aleutian District of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management

area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 1997 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific ocean perch in this area.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 24, 1997, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 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-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The TAC of Pacific ocean perch for the Central Aleutian District was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the BSAI (62 FR 7168, February 18, 1997) as 3,170 metric tons (mt). See § 679.20(c)(3)(iii).

In accordance with § 679.20 (d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region,

NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the TAC of Pacific ocean perch specified for the Central Aleutian District will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 2,170 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 1,000 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Aleutian District.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts for applicable gear types may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 24, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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