

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961126334-7025-02; I.D. 090597A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 1997 total allowable catch (TAC) for pollock in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 7, 1997, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Pearson, 907-486-6919.

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-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 1997 TAC for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA was established as 18,600 metric tons (mt) by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (62 FR 8179, February 24, 1997), determined in accordance with § 679.20(a)(5)(ii)(A).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 1997 TAC for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 18,500 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 100 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 closing directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA.

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

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1997 TAC for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA. Providing prior notice and an opportunity for comment is impracticable and contrary to public interest. The fleet will soon take the 1997 TAC for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA. Further delay would only result in overharvest which would disrupt the FMP's objective of providing sufficient pollock as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by 50 CFR 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: September 5, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961126334-7052-02; I.D. 090597B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). NMFS is requiring that catch of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in this area be treated in the same manner as prohibited species and discarded at sea with a minimum of injury. This action is necessary because the allocation of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in this area has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 5, 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 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-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 allocation of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (62 FR 8179, February 24, 1997), and subsequent reserve apportionment (62 FR 11771, March 13, 1997) as 21,803 metric tons (mt). See § 679.20(c)(4).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the allocation of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that further catches of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b)(2).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the allocation of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. Providing prior notice and an opportunity for comment is impracticable and contrary to public interest. The fleet has taken the allocation of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component. Further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under