

action should not be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

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

Dated: March 9, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

[FR Doc. 98-6476 Filed 3-10-98; 9:07 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 971208295-7295-01; I.D. 030998A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod in the Central 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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the interim specification for Pacific cod by vessels

catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 10, 1998, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998.

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 interim specification of Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA was established by the Interim 1998 Harvest Specifications (62 FR 65622, December 15, 1997) as 7,864 metric tons (mt), determined in accordance with § 679.20(c)(2)(i).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 1998 interim specification of Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 7,564 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 300 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 cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area 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 interim TAC limitations and other restrictions on the fisheries established in the interim 1998 harvest specifications for groundfish for the GOA. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1998 interim TAC of Pacific cod allocated for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to public interest, and further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not 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: March 10, 1998.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

[FR Doc. 98-6568 Filed 3-10-98; 3:04 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F