

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 971229312-7312-01; I.D. 052898A]

Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Whiting Closure for the Mothership Sector

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

ACTION: Fishing restrictions; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the end of the 1998 mothership fishery for whiting at 9 p.m. local time (l.t.) May 31, 1998, because the allocation for the mothership sector will be reached by that time. This action is intended to keep the harvest of whiting at levels announced by NMFS on January 6, 1998.

DATES: Effective from 9 p.m. l.t. May 31, 1998, until the start of the 1999 primary season for the mothership sector, unless modified, superseded or rescinded, which will be published in the **Federal Register**. Comments will be accepted through June 18, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comment to William Stelle, Jr., Administrator, Northwest Region (Regional Administrator), NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115-0070; or William Hogarth, Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Katherine King at 206-526-6145.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This action is authorized by regulations implementing the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which governs the groundfish fishery off Washington, Oregon, and California. On January 6, 1998 (63 FR 419), regulations were published announcing the annual management measures for Pacific Coast whiting. The regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4) (62 FR 27519, May 20, 1997) established separate allocations for the catcher/processor, mothership, and shore-based sectors of the whiting fishery. Each allocation is a harvest guideline, which, when reached, results in the end of the primary season for that sector. The catcher/processor sector is composed of catcher/processors, which are vessels

that harvest and process whiting. The mothership sector is composed of motherships and catcher vessels that harvest whiting for delivery to motherships. Motherships are vessels that process, but do not harvest, whiting. The shoreside sector is composed of vessels that harvest whiting for delivery to shore-based processors. The allocations, which are based on the 1998 commercial harvest guideline for whiting of 207,000 metric tons (mt), are: 70,400 mt (34 percent) for the catcher/processor sector; 49,700 mt (24 percent) for the mothership sector; and 86,900 mt (42 percent) for the shoreside sector.

The best available information on May 28, 1998, indicates that 33,841 mt of whiting had been taken by the mothership sector through May 26, 1998, and that the 49,700-mt mothership allocation would be reached by 9 p.m. l.t. May 31, 1998. Accordingly, the primary season for the mothership sector ends at 9 p.m. l.t. May 31, 1998, at which time further at-sea processing and receipt of whiting by a mothership, or taking and retaining, possessing or landing of whiting by a catcher boat in the mothership sector, are prohibited. The regulations at 50 CFR 600.323(a)(3)(i) describe the primary season for vessels delivering to motherships as the period(s) when at-sea processing is allowed and the fishery is open for the mothership sector.

Attainment of the catcher/processor and shore-based sector allocations is not announced at this time.

NMFS Action

For the reasons stated above, and in accordance with the regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4)(iii)(B), NMFS herein announces:

Effective 9 p.m. l.t. May 31, 1998-(1) Further receiving or at-sea processing of whiting by a mothership is prohibited. No additional unprocessed whiting may be brought on board after at-sea processing is prohibited, but a mothership may continue to process whiting that was on board before at-sea processing was prohibited; and (2) whiting may not be taken and retained, possessed, or landed by a catcher vessel participating in the mothership sector.

Classification

This action is authorized by the regulations implementing the FMP. The determination to take this action is based on the most recent data available. The aggregate data upon which the determination is based are available for public inspection at the Office of the Regional Administrator (see **ADDRESSES**)

during business hours. This action is taken under the authority of 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4)(iii)(B) and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: May 29, 1998.

George H. Darcy,

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 660

[Docket No. 980521135-8135-01; I.D. 051198B]

RIN 0648-AK85

Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Western Pacific Crustacean Fisheries; 1998 Harvest Guideline

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

ACTION: Harvest guideline for crustaceans for 1998.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces a 1998 harvest guideline of 286,000 lobsters (spiny and slipper lobsters combined) for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) crustacean fishery, which opens on July 1, 1998. The harvest guideline applies to the entire NWHI; however, due to the potential for overexploitation of lobster populations at certain NWHI banks/areas, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is considering allocating the harvest guideline among specific areas or banks to ensure the long-term health of the lobster populations and stability of the fishery. The intent of this action is to prevent overfishing and achieve the objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for the Crustacean Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region (FMP).

DATES: Effective July 1, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Copies of background material pertaining to this action may be obtained from Alvin Katekaru, Pacific Islands Area Office, Southwest Region, NMFS, 2570 Dole Street, Honolulu, HI 96822 or Kitty Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Alvin Katekaru at (808) 973-2985 or Kitty Simonds at (808) 522-8220.