

section pertaining to removal of identification from equipment.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 971208297-8054-02; I.D. 072498D]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; "Other Rockfish" 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 "other rockfish" in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). NMFS is requiring that catch of "other rockfish" 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 amount of the "other rockfish" 1998 total allowable catch (TAC) in this area has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 27, 1998, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery 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. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(ii), the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (63 FR 12027, March 12, 1998) established the amount of the 1998 "other rockfish" TAC in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA as 20 metric tons (mt).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the amount of the "other rockfish" TAC in the Western

Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that further catches of "other rockfish" in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the amount of the "other rockfish" TAC in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The fleet has taken the amount of the "other rockfish" TAC in the Western Regulatory Area. 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 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

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: July 27, 1998.

Bruce C. 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. 971208297-8054-02; I.D. 072498F]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Deep-Water Species Fishery by Vessels Using Trawl Gear in 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 species that comprise the deep-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the third seasonal bycatch allowance of Pacific halibut apportioned to the deep-water species fishery in the GOA has been caught.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 28, 1998, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 1, 1998.

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 prohibited species bycatch mortality allowance of Pacific halibut for the GOA trawl deep-water species fishery, which is defined at § 679.21(d)(3)(iii)(B), was established by the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (63 FR 12027, March 12, 1998) for the third season, the period July 1, 1998 through September 30, 1998, as 400 mt.

In accordance with § 679.21(d)(7)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the third seasonal apportionment of the 1998 Pacific halibut bycatch mortality allowance specified for the trawl deep-water species fishery in the GOA has been caught. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for the deep-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the GOA. The species and species groups that comprise the deep-water species fishery are rockfish, deep water flatfish, Rex sole, arrowtooth flounder, and sablefish.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts 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 in order to prevent overharvesting the third seasonal apportionment of the 1998 Pacific halibut bycatch mortality allowance specified for the trawl deep-water species fishery in the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The third seasonal bycatch allowance of Pacific halibut apportioned to the deep-water species fishery in the GOA has been caught. Further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action can not be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under