

1200 hrs, A.I.t., February 2, 1998 (64 FR 4790, February 1, 1999); the Central Regulatory Area to directed fishing for Pacific cod, effective 1200 hrs A.I.t., February 25, 1999 (64 FR 9937); and the Eastern Regulatory Area to directed fishing for pollock, effective 1200 hrs, March 6, 1999; and the Western Regulatory Area to directed fishing for Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component, effective 1200 hrs A.I.t., March 8, 1999. The closures for Statistical Areas 610 and 630 will remain in effect until 1200 hrs, A.I.t., June 1, 1999.

These closures supersede the closures announced in the interim 1999 harvest specifications (64 FR 46, January 4, 1999). While these closures are in effect, the maximum retainable bycatch amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a fishing trip. These closures to directed fishing are in addition to closures and prohibitions found in regulations at 50 CFR part 679. Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas. The definitions of GOA deep-water flatfish and "Other rockfish" species categories are provided in the **Federal Register** publication of the Final 1999 Harvest Specifications.

NMFS may implement other closures during the 1999 fishing year, as necessary for effective conservation and management.

#### Classification

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

This action responds to the TAC limitations and other restrictions on the fisheries established in the final 1999 harvest specifications for groundfish for the GOA. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1999 TACs for several groundfish species in the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The fleet is currently harvesting groundfish, 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.

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

Dated: March 9, 1999.

**Gary C. Matlock,**

*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. 990304062-9062-01; I.D. 030999B]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Vessels Catching Pacific Cod for Processing by the Inshore Component 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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the final 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.I.t.), March 8, 1999, through 2400 hrs, A.I.t., December 31, 1999.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Nick Hindman, 907-581-2062.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone 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. 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.

The Final 1999 Harvest Specifications, which were filed on March 8, 1999, and will be published in the **Federal Register** on March 11, 1999, established the final specification of

Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) for processing by the inshore component of the Western Regulatory Area as 17,014 metric tons (mt) in accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(ii).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the amount of the 1999 final specification of Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 16,714 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. NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

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

#### Classification

This action responds to the final TAC limitations and other restrictions on the fisheries established in the final 1999 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1999 final TAC for Pacific cod allocated for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the 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 § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 9, 1999.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

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

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