

The FMP was prepared by the Gulf of Mexico and by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) and is implemented under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

Based on the Councils' recommended total allowable catch and the allocation ratios in the FMP, NMFS implemented a commercial quota for the Gulf of Mexico migratory group of king mackerel in the Florida east coast subzone of 1.17 million lb (0.53 million kg) (50 CFR 622.42(c)(1)(i)(A)(I)). The Florida east coast subzone extends from 25°20.4' N. lat. (due east of the Dade/Monroe County, FL, boundary) to 29°25' N. lat. (due east of the Flagler/Volusia County, FL, boundary) through March 31, 1999.

Under 50 CFR 622.43(a)(3), NMFS is required to close any segment of the king mackerel commercial fishery when its quota has been reached, or is projected to be reached, by filing a notification at the Office of the Federal Register. NMFS has determined that the commercial quota of 1.17 million lb (0.53 million kg) for Gulf group king mackerel for vessels fishing in the Florida east coast subzone was reached on March 12, 1999. Accordingly, the commercial fishery for king mackerel for such vessels in the Florida east coast subzone is closed effective 12:01 a.m., local time, March 13, 1999, through March 31, 1999. The closure remains in effect until April 1, 1999, when the boundary separating the Gulf from the Atlantic migratory group of king mackerel shifts from the east coast to the west coast of Florida.

Except for a person aboard a charter vessel or headboat, during the closure, no person aboard a vessel for which a commercial permit for king mackerel has been issued may fish for Gulf group king mackerel in the EEZ in the closed zones or retain Gulf group king mackerel in or from the EEZ of the closed zones. A person aboard a vessel that has a valid charter vessel/headboat permit for coastal migratory pelagic fish may continue to retain king mackerel in or from the closed zones under the bag and possession limits set forth in 50 CFR 622.39(c)(1)(ii) and (c)(2), provided the vessel is operating as a charter vessel or headboat. A charter vessel or headboat that also has a commercial king mackerel permit is considered to be operating as a charter vessel or headboat when it carries a passenger who pays a

fee or when there are more than three persons aboard, including operator and crew.

During the closure, king mackerel from the closed zones or subzones taken in the EEZ, including those harvested under the bag and possession limits, may not be purchased or sold. This prohibition does not apply to trade in king mackerel from the closed zones that were harvested, landed ashore, sold prior to the closure, and held in cold storage by a dealer or processor.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.43(a)(3) and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 12, 1999.

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

[I.D. 030999C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Sablefish Managed Under the Individual Fishing Quota Program

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

ACTION: Fishing season dates.

SUMMARY: NMFS is opening directed fishing for sablefish with fixed gear managed under the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. The season will open on 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 15, 1999, and will close 1200 hrs, A.l.t., November 15, 1999. This period is the same as the IFQ season for Pacific halibut announced by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). The IFQ halibut season is announced by publication in the **Federal Register**.

DATES: Effective March 15, 1999, 1200 hrs, A.l.t., until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., November 15, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James Hale, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Since 1995, NMFS has managed fishing for Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) and sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*) with fixed gear in the IFQ regulatory areas defined in § 679.2 under the IFQ Program. The IFQ Program is a regulatory regime designed to promote the conservation and management of these fisheries and to further the objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Northern Pacific Halibut Act. Persons holding quota share receive an annual allocation of IFQ. Persons receiving an annual allocation of IFQ are authorized to harvest IFQ species within specified limitations. Further information on the implementation of the IFQ Program, and the rationale supporting it, are contained in the preamble to the final rule implementing the IFQ Program published in the **Federal Register**, November 9, 1993 (58 FR 59375) and subsequent amendments.

This announcement is consistent with § 679.23(g)(1), which requires that the directed fishing season for sablefish managed under the IFQ program be specified by the Administrator, Alaska Region, and announced by publication in the **Federal Register**. This method of season announcement was selected to facilitate coordination between the sablefish season, chosen by the Administrator, Alaska Region, and the halibut season, chosen by the IPHC. The directed fishing season for sablefish with fixed gear managed under the IFQ program will open at 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 15, 1999, and will close 1200 hrs, A.l.t., November 15, 1999. This period runs concurrently with the IFQ season for Pacific halibut announced by the IPHC. The IFQ halibut season is announced by publication in the **Federal Register**.

Classification

This action is taken under § 679.23(g)(1) and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: March 11, 1999.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

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