

quota (minus a discard estimate) was set at 1,143,087 lb (518,496 kg).

Section 648.121 requires the Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) to monitor the commercial scup quota for each quota period and, based upon dealer reports, state data, and other available information, to determine when the commercial quota has been harvested. The Regional Administrator is further required to publish notification in the **Federal Register** advising and notifying commercial vessels and dealer permit holders that, effective upon a specific date, the scup commercial quota has been harvested and no commercial quota is available for landing scup for the remainder of the Winter I period. The Regional Administrator has determined, based upon dealer reports and other available information, that the scup commercial quota for the 1999 Winter I period has been harvested.

The regulations at § 648.4(b) provide that Federal scup moratorium permit holders agree, as a condition of the permit, not to land scup in any state after NMFS has published a notification in the **Federal Register** stating that the commercial quota for the period has been harvested and that no commercial quota for the scup is available. Therefore, effective 0001 hours, April 1, 1999, further landings of scup in coastal states from Maine to North Carolina by vessels holding commercial Federal fisheries permits are prohibited through April 30, 1999. The Summer period for commercial scup harvest will open on May 1, 1999. Effective April 1, 1999, federally permitted dealers are also advised that they may not purchase scup from federally permitted vessels that land in coastal states from Maine through North Carolina for the remainder of the Winter I period (through April 30, 1999).

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 29, 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

[Docket No. 990304063-9063-01; I.D. 033199A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Trawling in Steller Sea Lion Critical Habitat in the Central Aleutian District of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting trawling within Steller sea lion critical habitat in the Central Aleutian District of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary because the 1999 critical habitat percentage of Atka mackerel established for the Central Aleutian District has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 31, 1999, until the end of the 1999 directed fishery for Atka mackerel within the Central Aleutian District.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (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 of Groundfish for the BSAI (64 FR 12103, March 11, 1999) established the 1999 TAC for Atka mackerel in the Central Aleutian District as 10,360 metric tons (mt), of which no more than 8,288 mt may be harvested from critical habitat. See § 679.20(c)(3)(iii) and 679.22(a)(8)(iii)(B).

In accordance with § 679.22(a)(8)(iii)(A), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the allowable harvest of Atka mackerel in Steller Sea lion critical habitat in the Central Aleutian District as specified under the Final 1999 Harvest Specification has been reached.

Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting trawling in critical habitat, as defined at 50 CFR part 226, Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 4, in the Central Aleutian District of the BSAI.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to avoid jeopardy to the continued existence of Steller sea lions. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. 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 31, 1999.

Bruce Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 99-8236 Filed 3-31-99; 2:49 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 990304063-9062-01; I.D. 033099B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska, Pacific Cod in the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Apportionment of reserve.

SUMMARY: NMFS is apportioning the initial reserve of Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to allow incidental catch of Pacific cod to be retained in other directed fisheries and to account for previous harvest of the total allowable catch (TAC) in the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), April 5, 1999, until 2400, A.l.t., December 31, 1999. Comments must be received by April 20, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be sent to Sue Salvesson, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, 709 West 9th Street, Room 453, Juneau, AK