

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 679**

[Docket No. 990304062-9062-01; I.D. 081799E]

Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Groundfish Fisheries by Vessels Using Hook-and-Line 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 groundfish by vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), except for sablefish or demersal shelf rockfish. This action is necessary because the 1999 Pacific halibut bycatch mortality allowance apportioned to hook-and-line gear targeting groundfish other than sablefish or demersal shelf rockfish in the GOA has been caught.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 1, 1999, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Pearson, 907-481-1780 or tom.pearson@noaa.gov.

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 of Groundfish for the GOA (64 FR 12094, March 11, 1999) established the Pacific halibut bycatch mortality allowance for groundfish included in the other hook-and-line fishery, which is defined at § 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(C), for 1999 as 290 metric tons. The other hook-and-line fishery includes all groundfish, except sablefish and demersal shelf rockfish.

In accordance with § 679.21(d)(7)(ii), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the 1999 Pacific halibut bycatch mortality allowance specified for the hook-and-line groundfish fisheries other than sablefish or demersal shelf rockfish in the GOA has been caught. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting

directed fishing for groundfish other than sablefish or demersal shelf rockfish by vessels using hook-and-line gear in the GOA.

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 exceeding the 1999 Pacific halibut bycatch mortality allowance specified for the groundfish fisheries other than sablefish or demersal shelf rockfish by vessels using hook-and-line gear in the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The 1999 bycatch mortality allowance of Pacific halibut apportioned to hook-and-line gear targeting groundfish other than sablefish or demersal shelf rockfish in the GOA has been caught. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action can 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 § 679.21 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: August 19, 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. 081799D]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod in the Central Regulatory Area in the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Modification of a closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to fully

utilize the 1999 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod allocated to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in that area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time, September 1, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Pearson, 907-481-1780 or tom.pearson@noaa.gov.

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 is in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(6)(iii) the 1999 TAC of Pacific cod allocated to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA was established as 38,642 metric tons (mt) by the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (64 FR 12094, March 11, 1999) and subsequent reserve release (64 FR 16362, April 5, 1999).

NMFS closed the inshore component fishery for Pacific cod in the Central Regulatory Area to directed fishing under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on March 14, 1999 (64 FR 13122, March 17, 1999).

NMFS has determined that as of August 24, 1999, approximately 4,000 mt remain in the directed fishing allowance. Therefore, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

Classification

All other closures remain in full force and effect. This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately in order to allow full utilization of the Pacific cod TAC. Providing prior notice and opportunity for public comment for this action is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. Further delay would only disrupt the FMP objective of providing a portion of the Pacific cod TAC for vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component. 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: August 19, 1999.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

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