

opportunity for fishermen to harvest the available quota but will ensure that the quota is not exceeded. Therefore, the LCS commercial fishery will be extended to October 15, 1999, at 11:30 pm local time, and will afterwards remain closed through December 31, 1999.

During a closure, retention of, fishing for, possessing or selling LCS are prohibited for persons fishing aboard vessels issued a limited access permit under 50 CFR 635.4. After October 15, 1999, the sale, purchase, trade, or barter of carcasses and/or fins of LCS harvested by a person aboard a vessel that has been issued a permit under 50 CFR 635.4 are prohibited, except that possession is authorized for LCS that were harvested, offloaded, and sold prior to the closure and that were held in storage by a dealer or processor.

Commercial fishing for pelagic and small coastal sharks may continue until further notice. When quotas are projected to be reached, NMFS will file notice of closure at the Office of the Federal Register.

Those vessels that have not been issued a limited access permit under 50 CFR 635.4 may not sell sharks and are subject to the recreational retention limits and size limits specified at 50 CFR 635.22(c) and 635.20(e). The recreational fishery is not affected by this action.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR part 635 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: September 28, 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. 990304062-9062-01; I.D. 092999B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Shortraker and Roughey Rockfish in the Eastern 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 shortraker and roughey rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). NMFS is requiring that catch of shortraker and roughey 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 1999 total allowable catch (TAC) of shortraker and roughey rockfish in this area has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 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 1999 TAC of shortraker and roughey rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA was established as 460 metric tons by the Final 1999 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (64 FR 12094, March 11, 1999). See § 679.20(c)(3)(ii).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the 1999 TAC for shortraker and roughey rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that further catches of shortraker and roughey rockfish in the Eastern 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 1999 TAC for shortraker and roughey rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The fleet has taken the 1999 TAC for shortraker and roughey rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA. 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: September 29, 1999.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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