

from the incidental catch account to the directed fishing allowances established at section 206(b). This transfer will increase the allocation to catcher vessels harvesting pollock for processing by the inshore component by 1,000 mt, to catcher/processors and catcher vessels harvesting pollock for processing by catcher processors in the offshore component by 800 mt, and to catcher vessels harvesting pollock for processing by motherships in the offshore component by 200 mt. Pursuant to section 210(c) of the AFA, no less than 8.5 percent of the 800 mt allocated to catcher processors in the offshore component, 68 mt, will be available for harvest only by eligible catcher vessels delivering to listed catcher processors.

Regulations in the emergency interim rule establishing Steller sea lion protection measures for the pollock fisheries off Alaska allow for catch to occur within a season so that pollock removals from all sectors do not exceed 30 percent of the annual TAC (64 FR 3437, January 22, 1999). See § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(C). Thirty percent of the annual pollock TAC is equal to 297,600 mt. With this apportionment the C season catch for the three combined directed fisheries and the CDQ fishery will be 265,000 mt thereby not violating the 30 percent restriction.

Classification

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 pollock TAC. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. Further delay would only disrupt the AFA and FMP's objective of providing pollock for harvest in directed fisheries. 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 taken under 50 CFR 679.20, and is exempt from OMB review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: October 14, 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. 101599F]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Vessels Using Hook-and-line and Pot Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is closing directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels using hook-and-line and pot gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 1999 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod allocated for vessels using hook-and-line and pot gear in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 19, 1999, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1999.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI 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), and subsequent

reallocation (64 FR 52472, September 29, 1999) established the 1999 TAC of Pacific cod allocated to vessels using hook-and-line and pot gear in the BSAI as 91,300 metric tons (mt). See § 679.20(c)(3)(iii) and § 679.20(a)(7)(i)(A).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 1999 TAC of Pacific cod allocated to vessels using hook-and-line and pot gear in the BSAI will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 91,200 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 100 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. Consequently, NMFS is closing directed fishing for Pacific cod for vessels using hook-and-line and pot gear in the BSAI.

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 overharvesting the 1999 TAC of Pacific cod allocated to vessels using hook-and-line and pot gear in the BSAI. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The Pacific cod directed fishing allowance established for vessels using hook-and-line and pot gear will soon be reached. Further delay would only result in overharvest. 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 § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: October 15, 1999.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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