

papers (or alternative report) as required (critical).

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 990422103-9209-02; 031099B]

RIN 0648-AL75

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Fishery Management Plan for the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fisheries; Extension of an Interim Rule

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

ACTION: Extension of expiration date.

SUMMARY: NMFS issues this notification to inform the public that the interim rule published on September 9, 1999, to implement conservation equivalencies for the summer flounder fishery is extended through September 5, 2000. Without this extension, the interim rule would expire on March 9, 2000. The extension allows states to continue to implement measures for the summer flounder recreational fishery that are alternatives to the annual Federal measures, yet achieve a reduction in fishing mortality equivalent to that achieved by the annual Federal measures.

DATES: The rule, effective September 2, 1999, through March 9, 2000, extends its expiration date from March 9, 2000, to September 5, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and Regulatory Impact Review (RIR) prepared for the initial action are available from: Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Myles Raizin, Fishery Policy Analyst, (978) 281-9104.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

An interim rule implementing conservation equivalencies for the summer flounder recreational fishery was published on September 9, 1999 (64 FR 48965), and will expire on March 9, 2000. The interim rule allows states to select a combination of minimum fish

sizes, possession limits, and closed seasons to meet a target reduction in the recreational harvest limit for summer flounder. A combination of these measures must accomplish the same reduction as those implemented for the recreational fishery in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Under the interim rule, states that wish to implement equivalent measures must submit proposed management options to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) for approval. Once the Commission approves a state equivalency proposal, the Commission is required to recommend to NMFS that notification be published in the **Federal Register** to waive the default measures implemented for the EEZ and notify the public of equivalent measures.

The interim rule allowed for the implementation and publication of conservation equivalencies for the 1999 fishery. To provide the same mechanism for the 2000 fishery, the effectiveness of this rule must be extended. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) has included conservation equivalency as part of its recommended management measures for 2000. In addition, the Council is preparing an amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass to implement conservation equivalency on a permanent basis; however, the amendment is not yet complete. Because the interim rule will expire on March 9, 2000, NMFS finds it necessary to extend the interim rule to allow the establishment of conservation equivalencies for the 2000 fishery. This extension is effective through September 5, 2000.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 648

Fisheries, Fishing, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: March 1, 2000.

Andrew A. Rosenberg,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 648 is amended as follows:

PART 648—FISHERIES OF THE NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

1. The authority citation for part 648 continues to read as follows:

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

2. In § 648.107(a), the first sentence is revised to read as follows:

§ 648.107 Conservation equivalent measures for the recreational summer flounder fishery.

(a) Through September 5, 2000, states may implement on an annual basis

conservation equivalent measures that reduce the recreational catch to the same extent as the annual Federal summer flounder measures specified under § 648.100(c) to achieve the recreational harvest limit in any year. * * *

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 000211039-0039-01; I.D. 111899A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Final 2000 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish; Correction

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

ACTION: Final 2000 harvest specifications; correction.

SUMMARY: NMFS published final 2000 harvest specifications for the groundfish fishery of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) on February 18, 2000. These final 2000 harvest specifications for the GOA inadvertently omitted changes made by previous rulemaking. Therefore, NMFS is correcting the published final 2000 total allowable catch amounts (TACs) specified for pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the Gulf of Alaska (W/C GOA).

DATES: Effective February 15, 2000, through 2400 hrs A.L.T. December 31, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sue Salveson, 907-586-7228.

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.

On January 3, 2000, NMFS published interim 2000 pollock TACs (65 FR 65).

For pollock, the interim TAC consists of the entire A season allocation. These interim pollock TACs were not further apportioned by time and area. On January 25, 2000, NMFS published an emergency rule implementing Steller sea lion protection measures (65 FR 3892). The emergency rule amended the original interim TACs for pollock in the W/C GOA by revising the TAC levels to account for the best available scientific information and apportioned the TACs by area for the A season.

On January 27, 2000, NMFS issued an inseason adjustment amending the time and area apportionments of the W/C

GOA interim pollock TACs (65 FR 4892, February 2, 2000). The amended interim TAC apportionments reflected a revised procedure for more accurately allocating pollock as authorized under the emergency rule.

NMFS published the final 2000 harvest specifications for the GOA groundfish fishery on February 18, 2000 (65 FR 8298). Inadvertently, the changes to the A season TACs and apportionments made by the emergency rule and the inseason adjustment to the emergency rule for the W/C GOA pollock TACs were omitted from the

final 2000 harvest specifications for the GOA groundfish fishery.

Correction

In the rule to implement the Final 2000 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska, published on February 18, 2000 (65 FR 8298), FR Doc. 00-3910, the following corrections are made to the TAC amounts specified for pollock in the W/C GOA.

1. On page 8301, in Table 1, the entire entry "Pollock" and footnote 2 are correctly revised to read as follows:

TABLE 1. 2000 ABCS, TACS, INITIAL TACS (PACIFIC COD ONLY) AND OVERFISHING LEVELS OF GROUND FISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/WEST YAKUTAT (W/C/WYK), WESTERN (W), CENTRAL (C), SHELIKOF STRAIT, EASTERN (E) REGULATORY AREAS, AND IN THE WEST YAKUTAT (WYK), SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE (SEO), AND GULF-WIDE (GW) DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA.

[Values are in metric tons]

Species	Area ¹	ABC	TAC	Initial TAC Overfishing
Pollock ²				
Shumagin	(610)	32,340	32,340	
Chirikof	(620)	13,372	13,372	
Kodiak	(630)	24,501	24,501	
Shelikof	20,987	20,987	
WYK	(640)	2,340	2,340	
Subtotal	W/C/WYK	93,540	93,540	130,760
SEO	(650)	6,460	6,460	8,610
Total		100,000	100,000	139,370
*	*	*	*	*

² Under the emergency interim rule (65 FR 3892, January 25, 2000) pollock is apportioned in the Western/Central Regulatory areas to the Shelikof Strait conservation area (defined at § 679.22(b)(3)(iii)(B)) in the A and B seasons only. In accordance with § 679.22(b)(3)(iii)(C) the pollock TAC in the Shelikof Strait is determined by calculating a ratio equal to the most recent estimate of pollock biomass in the Shelikof Strait divided by the total pollock biomass in the GOA. This ratio is multiplied by the amount of the combined Western and Central GOA TAC available in the A and B seasons. The remainder of the combined Western and Central GOA TAC in the A and B seasons is then apportioned to areas 610, 620, 630 outside the Shelikof Strait based on the distribution of pollock outside the Shelikof Strait, which is 56 percent, 4 percent, and 40 percent respectively. During the C and D seasons pollock is apportioned based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass at 42 percent, 25 percent, and 33 percent in Regulatory Areas 610, 620, and 630 respectively. These seasonal apportionments are shown in Tables 3 and 4. In the Eastern Regulatory Area, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.

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2. On page 8304, Table 3 is correctly revised to read as follows:

TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF POLLOCK IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL REGULATORY AREAS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA (W/C GOA); BIOMASS DISTRIBUTION, AREA APPORTIONMENTS, AND SEASONAL ALLOWANCES OF ANNUAL TAC FOR THE A AND B SEASONS IN 2000.

Statistical area	Biomass percent	2000 Annual TAC	Seasonal Allowances of Annual TAC	
			A	B
			(30%)	(15%)
Shelikof	51.1	20,987	13,991	6,996
Shumagin 610)	27.4	32,340	7,498	3,749
Chirik of ¹ (620)	2.0	13,372	546	273
Kodiak ¹ (630)	19.5	24,501	5,325	2,662
TOTAL	100.0	91,200	27,360	13,680

¹ A and B seasonal allowances in the Chirikof and Kodiak Districts are outside the Shelikof Strait defined at § 679.20(b)(2)(iii)(B).

Classification

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: February 25, 2000.

Andrew A. Rosenberg,
Deputy Asst. Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 00-5225 Filed 3-6-00; 8:45 am]

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