

Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2003 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific ocean perch in this area.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 8, 2003, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2003.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Josh Keaton, 907-586-2778.

**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 2003 TAC of Pacific ocean perch for the Central Regulatory Area was established as 8,510 metric tons (mt) by the final 2003 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (68 FR 9924, March 3, 2003).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2003 TAC for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 8,010 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 500 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 prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

#### Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is contrary to the public interest. This requirement is contrary to the public interest as it would delay the closure of the fishery, lead to exceeding the 2003 TAC for Pacific ocean perch in the

Central Regulatory Area of the GOA, and therefore reduce the public's ability to use and enjoy the fishery resource.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: July 2, 2003.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

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

[FR Doc. 03-17517 Filed 7-7-03; 3:05 pm]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 021122286-3036-02; I.D. 070203D]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the West Yakutat District of 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 Pacific ocean perch in the West Yakutat District of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2003 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific ocean perch in this area.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 8, 2003, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2003.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Josh Keaton, 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.

The 2003 TAC of Pacific ocean perch for the West Yakutat District was established as 810 metric tons (mt) by the final 2003 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (68 FR 9924, March 3, 2003).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2003 TAC for Pacific ocean perch in the West Yakutat District will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 750 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 60 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 prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

#### Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is contrary to the public interest. This requirement is contrary to the public interest as it would delay the closure of the fishery, lead to exceeding the 2003 TAC for Pacific ocean perch in the Western Yakutat District of the GOA, and therefore reduce the public's ability to use and enjoy the fishery resource.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: July 2, 2003.

**Bruce M. Morehead**

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

[FR Doc. 03-17516 Filed 7-7-03; 3:05 pm]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**