

processors, and will benefit the fishing communities in southern California, where virtually all Pacific mackerel is landed. Enforcement and administrative costs (primarily port sampling) remain unchanged because calls at ports of landing are designed not only to assess the status of Pacific mackerel but all species harvested during the year by the CPS fleet. Average conditions are likely to prevail during the 2003–2004 fishing season, that is, ex-vessel revenue derived from Pacific mackerel will fall between \$1.8 million and \$1.4 million based on a real ex-vessel price that has varied between \$172.59/mt and \$126.98/mt from 1993 to 2002.

The final action will yield potentially lower revenue from Pacific mackerel than what otherwise might be possible under environmental conditions more favorable to recruitment of Pacific mackerel; however, the low harvest guideline for the 2003–2004 fishing season will provide a small increase in revenue above that of the 2002–2003 fishing season and will not have a substantial effect on overall vessel profitability.

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

Dated: September 29, 2003.

Rebecca Lent,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 021122286–3036–02; I.D. 092903C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 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 pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the pollock total allowable catch (TAC) for Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 2, 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 pollock TAC in Statistical Area 630 is 10,339 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2003 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (68 FR 9924, March 3, 2003).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator, has determined that the pollock TAC in Statistical Area 630 has been reached.

Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 10,289 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 50 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 pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

Maximum retainable 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. 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 TAC in Statistical Area 630, 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: September 29, 2003.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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