

Dated: January 30, 2004.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

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

[FR Doc. 04-2294 Filed 1-30-04; 3:30 pm]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 031126297-3297-01; I.D. 013004B]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Vessels Catching Pacific Cod for Processing by the Offshore Component in the Central 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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the interim 2004 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 2, 2004, until superseded by the notice of Final 2004 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA, which will be published in the **Federal Register**.

**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 interim 2004 TAC of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Central Regulatory Area is 1,213 metric tons (mt) as

established by the interim 2004 harvest specifications of groundfish for the GOA (68 FR 67964, December 5, 2003).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the interim 2004 TAC of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 1,083 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 130 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 cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component 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 impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent the Agency from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of the fishery under the interim 2004 TAC of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

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 section 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: January 30, 2004.

**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. 031126295-3295-01; I.D. 012904C]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Atka Mackerel in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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

**ACTION:** Rescission and revision of a closure.

**SUMMARY:** The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is rescinding a February 2, 2004, closure announced previously for the first directed fishery for Atka mackerel within the harvest limit area (HLA) in Statistical Area 543 of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI), and is establishing a revised date for the closure at 12 noon, A.l.t., January 30, 2004. This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the interim 2004 Atka mackerel HLA limit established for area 543 pursuant to the interim 2004 Atka mackerel total allowable catch (TAC). The closure date for the first directed fishery in the HLA in area 542, effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 2, 2004, and the opening and closures dates of the second directed fisheries in the HLA in area 542 and area 543 effective, 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 4, 2004, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 13, 2004, remain unchanged.

**DATES:** The first directed fishery for Atka mackerel in the HLA in area 543 closes 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 30, 2004.

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

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone 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.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii), vessels using trawl gear for directed fishing for Atka mackerel previously registered with NMFS to fish in the HLA fisheries in areas 542 and/or 543. NMFS