

3819 Alaska Spirit, FFP 3835 Seafisher, and FFP 3423 Alaska Warrior.

Classification

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 unnecessary. This notice merely advises the owners of these vessels of the results of a random assignment required by regulation. The notice needs to occur immediately to notify the owner of each vessel of its assignment to allow these vessel owners to plan for participation in the A season HLA fisheries in area 542 and area 543.

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 679.22 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: January 14, 2005.

John H. Dunnigan

*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. 041202338-4338-01; I.D. 011305A]

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

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

ACTION: Closures and openings.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel with gears other than jig in the Eastern Aleutian District (area 541) and the Bering Sea subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the interim 2005 total allowable catch (TAC) of Atka mackerel in these areas. NMFS is also announcing the opening

and closure dates of the first and second directed fisheries within the harvest limit area (HLA) in Statistical Areas 542 and 543. These actions are necessary to prevent exceeding the HLA limits established for the Central (area 542) and Western (area 543) Aleutian Districts pursuant to the interim 2005 Atka mackerel TAC.

DATES: The prohibition of directed fishing for Atka mackerel with gears other than jig in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea is effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 20, 2005, until superseded by the notice of final 2005 and 2006 harvest Specifications for Groundfish, which will be published in the **Federal Register**.

The first directed fisheries in the HLA in area 542 open effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 22, 2005, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 5, 2005.

The first directed fisheries in the HLA in area 543 open effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 22, 2005, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 29, 2005.

The second directed fishery in the HLA in area 542 open effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 7, 2005, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 21, 2005.

The second directed fishery in the HLA in area 543 open effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 7, 2005, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 14, 2005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew Smoker, 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 Management 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 interim Atka mackerel TAC for other gear in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea is 4,729 metric tons (mt) as established by the interim 2005 harvest specifications for groundfish (69 FR 76870, December 23, 2004). See §§ 679.20(c)(2)(ii) and 679.20(a)(8)(ii).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the interim Atka mackerel TAC for other gear in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea will be necessary as incidental catch to support other

anticipated groundfish fisheries. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of zero. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel with gears other than jig in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(C), the Regional Administrator is opening the first directed fisheries for Atka mackerel within the HLA in areas 542 and 543 48 hours after the closure of the area 541 Atka mackerel directed fishery. The Regional Administrator has established the opening date for the second HLA directed fisheries as 48 hours after the last closure of the first HLA fisheries in either area 542 or area 543.

Consequently, NMFS is opening and closing directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the HLA of areas 542 and 543 in accordance with the periods listed under the **DATES** section of this notice.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii), vessels using trawl gear for directed fishing for Atka mackerel have previously registered with NMFS to fish in the HLA fisheries in areas 542 and/or 543. NMFS has randomly assigned each vessel to the directed fishery or fisheries for which they have registered. NMFS has notified each vessel owner as to which fishery each vessel has been assigned by NMFS, published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(1), the HLA limits of the interim TACs in areas 542 and 543 are 7,931 mt and 5,268 mt, respectively. Based on those limits and the proportion of the number of vessels in each fishery compared to the total number of vessels participating in the HLA directed fishery for area 542 or 543, the harvest limit for each HLA directed fishery in areas 542 and 543 are as follows: for the first directed fishery in area 542, 3,966 mt; for the first directed fishery in area 543, 2,634 mt; for the second directed fishery in area 542, 3,965 mt; and for the second directed fishery in area 543, 2,634 mt. In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(E), the Regional Administrator has established the closure dates of the Atka mackerel directed fisheries in the HLA for areas 542 and 543 based on the amount of the harvest limit and the estimated fishing capacity of the vessels assigned to the respective fisheries. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the HLA of areas 542 and 543 in accordance with the dates and times listed under the **DATES** section of this notice.

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 NMFS

from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of the fishery under the interim 2005 TAC of Atka mackerel in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea and the opening and closures of the fisheries for the HLA limits established for the Central (area 542) and Western (area 543) Aleutian Districts pursuant to the interim 2005 Atka mackerel TAC.

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: January 14, 2005.

John H. Dunnigan,

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

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