

Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 643 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 185 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 has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

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 NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of January xx, 2006.

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: February 21, 2006.

James P. Burgess,

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. 041126333-5040-02; I.D. 021606F]

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: Temporary rule; 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 A season allocation of the 2006 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 19, 2006, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1, 2006.

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 A season allocation of the 2006 TAC of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 1,324 metric tons (mt) as established by the 2005 and 2006 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (70 FR 8958, February 24, 2005).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2006 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 soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 1,019 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 305 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 has been 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.

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

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 NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of February 16, 2006.

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: February 21, 2006.

James P. Burgess,

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