

§ 660.312 Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements.

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(d) * * *

(4) * * *

(iv) *Long-term departure exemption.*

A vessel participating in the open access fishery that is required to have VMS under § 660.312 (b)(3) may be exempted from VMS provisions after the end of the fishing year in which it participated in the open access fishery, providing the vessel submits a completed exemption report signed by the vessel owner that includes a statement signed by the vessel owner indicating that the vessel will not be used to take and retain or possess groundfish in the EEZ or land groundfish taken in the EEZ during the new fishing year.

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[FR Doc. E8-1430 Filed 1-25-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 679**

[Docket No. 070213032-7032-01]

RIN 0648-XF23

Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Shallow-Water Species Fishery by Amendment 80 Vessels Subject to Sideboard Limits in 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 species that comprise the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels subject to sideboard limits in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the first seasonal apportionment of the 2008 Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limit specified for the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels subject to sideboard limits in the GOA has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 23, 2008, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Hogan, 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 first seasonal apportionment of the 2008 Pacific halibut PSC limit specified for the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels subject to sideboard limits in the GOA is 10 metric tons as established by the 2007 and 2008 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (72 FR 9676, March 5, 2007) and revision (72 FR 71802, December 19, 2007), for the period 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 20, 2008, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2008.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(vi)(C)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the first seasonal apportionment of the 2008 Pacific halibut PSC limit specified for the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels subject to sideboard limits in the GOA has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels subject to sideboard limits in the GOA. The species and species groups that comprise the shallow-water species fishery are pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates and "other species."

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 the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels subject to sideboard limits using trawl gear in 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 18, 2008.

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 § 679.21 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: January 22, 2008.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 08-342 Filed 1-23-08; 2:49 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 679**

[Docket No. 070213033-7033-01]

RIN 0648-XF25

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Vessels in the Amendment 80 Limited Access Fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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 for vessels participating in the Amendment 80 limited access fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2008 Pacific cod allowable catch (TAC) specified for vessels participating in the Amendment 80 limited access fishery in the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 23, 2008, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Hogan, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish 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 A season allowance of the 2008 Pacific cod TAC allocated to vessels participating in the Amendment 80 limited access fishery in the BSAI is 1,839 metric tons as established by the 2007 and 2008 final harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (72 FR 9451, March 2, 2007) and revision (72 FR 71802, December 19, 2007). See §§ 679.20(a)(7)(ii)(A), 679.20(a)(7)(iv)(A), and 679.91(c)(4).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the entire A season allowance of the 2008 Pacific cod TAC allocated to vessels participating in the Amendment 80 limited access fishery in the BSAI will be caught as incidental catch in directed fisheries for other groundfish fisheries. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 0 mt and is setting aside the remaining 1,839 mt

as incidental catch 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 participating in the Amendment 80 limited access fishery in the BSAI.

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 by vessels participating in the Amendment 80 limited access fishery in the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of January 22, 2008.

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 § 679.91 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: January 22, 2008.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 08-341 Filed 1-23-08; 2:48 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S