

LAGC scallop vessels shall be specified in this paragraph (e)(4)(ii)(A) through the framework adjustment process and shall determine the number of trips allocated to LAGC scallop vessels as specified in paragraph (e)(4)(ii)(B) of this section. LAGC vessels shall be allocated 1,067,000 lb (484 mt) in fishing year 2008, which is 5 percent of the 2008 Elephant Trunk Access Area TAC. LAGC vessels shall be allocated 785,700 lb (356 mt) in fishing year 2009, which is 5 percent of the 2009 Elephant Trunk Access Area TAC. The 2009 general category TAC may be reduced per § 648.60(a)(3)(i)(E)(2).

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 080326475-8686-02]

RIN 0648-XK61

Fisheries Off West Coast States; Coastal Pelagic Species Fisheries; Closure

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 sardine. This action is necessary because the directed harvest allocation total for the third allocation period (September 15 - December 31) is projected to be reached. From the date of closure until the new fishing season begins on January 1, 2009, Pacific sardine may only be harvested incidental to other fisheries, with incidental harvest constrained by a 20-percent by weight incidental catch rate. Fishing vessels must be in the process of offloading at the time of closure.

DATES: Effective 12:01 am Pacific Standard Time September 23, 2008, through January 1, 2009.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joshua Lindsay, Southwest Region, NMFS, (562) 980-4034.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the Pacific sardine fishery in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off the Pacific coast (California, Oregon, and Washington) in accordance with the Coastal Pelagic Species (CPS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Annual specifications published in the Federal

Register establish the total harvest guideline (HG) and allowable harvest levels for each Pacific sardine fishing season (January 1 - December 31). The total HG for the 2008 Pacific sardine fishing season (January 1, 2008 - December 31, 2008) is 89,093 mt and is divided into a directed harvest fishery of 80,184 mt and an incidental fishery of 8,909 mt. These directed and incidental harvest amounts are subdivided throughout the year in the following way: January 1-June 30, 26,550 mt is allocated for directed harvest with an incidental set-aside of 4,633 mt; July 1-September 14, 34,568 mt plus any portion not harvested from the initial allocation is allocated for directed harvest with an incidental set-aside of 1,069 mt; September 15-December 31, 19,066 mt plus any portion not harvested from earlier allocations is allocated for directed harvest with an incidental set-aside of 3,207 mt (73 FR 30811, May 29, 2008).

If during any of the seasonal allocation periods the applicable adjusted directed harvest allocation is projected to be taken, only incidental harvest is allowed and, for the remainder of the period, any incidental Pacific sardine landings will be counted against that period's incidental set aside. The incidental fishery will also be constrained to a 20-percent by weight incidental catch rate when Pacific sardine are landed with other CPS to minimize targeting of Pacific sardine and to maximize landings of harvestable stocks. In the event that an incidental set-aside is projected to be attained, all fisheries will be closed to the retention of Pacific sardine for the remainder of the period via appropriate rulemaking. If the set-aside is not fully attained or is exceeded in a given seasonal period, the directed harvest allocation in the following seasonal period will be automatically adjusted to account for the discrepancy.

Under 50 CFR 660.509 if the total HG or these apportionment levels for Pacific sardine are reached at any time, NMFS is required to close the Pacific sardine fishery via appropriate rulemaking and it is to remain closed until it re-opens either per the allocation scheme or the beginning of the next fishing season. In accordance with § 660.509 the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice in the Federal Register the date of the closure of the directed fishery for Pacific sardine.

The above in-season harvest restrictions are not intended to affect the prosecution the live bait portion of the Pacific sardine fishery.

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR 660.509 and is exempt from Office of Management and Budget review under Executive Order 12866.

NMFS 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) for the closure of the September 15 - December 31 directed harvest of Pacific sardine. For the reasons set forth below, notice and comment procedures are impracticable and contrary to the public interest. For the same reasons, NMFS also finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness for this action. This measure responds to the best available information and is necessary for the conservation and management of the Pacific sardine resource. A delay in effectiveness would cause the fishery to exceed the in-season harvest level. These seasonal harvest levels are important mechanisms in preventing overfishing and managing the fishery at optimum yield. The established directed and incidental harvest allocations are designed to allow fair and equitable opportunity to the resource by all sectors of the Pacific sardine fishery and to allow access to other profitable CPS fisheries, such as squid and Pacific mackerel.

Many of the same fishermen who harvest Pacific sardine rely on these other fisheries for a significant portion of their income.

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

Dated: September 18, 2008.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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. 071106673-8011-02]

RIN 0648-XK62

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Pot Catcher Processors 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.