

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

[Docket No. 111207737-2141-02]

RIN 0648-XC204

Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Shallow-Water Species Fishery by Vessels Using Trawl Gear 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 vessels using trawl gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the fourth seasonal apportionment of the Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 2, 2012, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 1, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Obren Davis, 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 fourth seasonal apportionment of the Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA is 150 metric tons as established by the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (77 FR 15194, March 14, 2012), for the period 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1, 2012, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 1, 2012.

In accordance with § 679.21(d)(7)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the fourth seasonal apportionment of the Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl shallow-water species fishery in the GOA has been reached.

Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear 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, squids, sharks, octopuses, and sculpins. This prohibition does not apply to fishing for pollock by vessels using pelagic trawl gear in those portions of the GOA open to directed fishing for pollock and vessels fishing under a cooperative quota permit in the cooperative fishery in the Rockfish Program for the Central 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 Acting 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 vessels 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 August 30, 2012.

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: August 31, 2012.

Lindsay Fullenkamp,

Acting Deputy 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. 111207737-2141-02]

RIN 0648-XC211

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher/Processors Using Trawl Gear in the Western 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 catcher/processors (C/Ps) using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2012 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to C/Ps using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 1, 2012, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Obren Davis, 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. Regulations governing sideboard protections for GOA groundfish fisheries appear at subpart B of 50 CFR part 680.

The 2012 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to C/Ps using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 497 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (77 FR 15194, March 14, 2012).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the 2012 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to C/Ps using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is

establishing a directed fishing allowance of 497 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 0 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 C/Ps using trawl gear 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 directed fishing closure of Pacific cod for C/Ps using trawl gear in 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 August 30, 2012.

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: August 31, 2012.

Lindsay Fullenkamp,

Acting Deputy 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. 111207737-2141-02]

RIN 0648-XC205

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pacific Cod in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska Management Area

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; reallocation.

SUMMARY: NMFS is reallocating the projected unused amount of Pacific cod from catcher vessels using trawl gear to vessels using jig gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska management area. This action is necessary to allow the 2012 total allowable catch of Pacific cod to be harvested.

DATES: Effective September 1, 2012, through 2400 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 31, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Obren Davis, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the Gulf of Alaska (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. Regulations governing sideboard protections for GOA groundfish fisheries appear at subpart B of 50 CFR part 680.

The 2012 Pacific cod total allowable catch specified for catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 7,952 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (77 FR 15194, March 14, 2012). The Administrator, Alaska Region (Regional Administrator) has determined that catcher vessels using trawl gear will not be able to harvest 150 mt of the 2012 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A)(3). In accordance with § 679.20(a)(12)(ii)(B), the Regional

Administrator has also determined that the jig sector currently has the capacity to harvest this excess allocation and reallocates 150 mt of Pacific cod from catcher vessels using trawl gear to vessels using jig gear.

The harvest specifications for Pacific cod included in the final 2012 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (77 FR 15194, March 14, 2012) are revised as follows: 7,802 mt for catcher vessels using trawl gear and 465 mt to vessels using jig gear.

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 reallocation of Pacific cod specified from catcher vessels using trawl gear to vessels using jig gear. Since the fishery is currently open, it is important to immediately inform the industry as to the revised allocations. Immediate notification is necessary to allow for the orderly conduct and efficient operation of this fishery, to allow the industry to plan for the fishing season, and to avoid potential disruption to the fishing fleet as well as processors. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of August 30, 2012.

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: August 31, 2012.

Lindsay Fullenkamp,

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