

Due to the increase in the butterfish DAH from previous years, the 2013 MSB specifications implemented a 3-phase butterfish management system to allow for maximum utilization of the butterfish resource without exceeding the stock-wide ACL. In phase 1, there is no trip limit for vessels issued longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits using mesh greater than or equal to 3 inches (76 mm), a 2,500-lb (1.13-mt) trip limit for longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits using mesh less than 3 inches (76 mm), and a trip limit of 600 lb (0.27 mt) for vessels issued squid/butterfish incidental catch permits. Once butterfish harvest reaches the trip hold reduction threshold to move from phase 1 to phase 2, the trip limit for longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit holders will be reduced while in phase 2 to 5,000 lb (2.27 mt) for vessels using greater than or equal to 3-inch (7.62 cm) mesh. The limit remains unchanged at 2,500-lb (1.13 mt) per trip or calendar day for vessels issued a Federal longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits and fishing with less than 3-inch (76-mm); and the incidental limit remains at 600 lb (0.27 mt). When we project butterfish harvest to reach the trip hold reduction thresholds to move from phase 2 to phase 3, the trip limit for all longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit holders will be reduced while in phase 3 to 500 lb (0.23 mt) to avoid quota overages. For phases 2 and 3, the quota thresholds to reduce the trip limits will vary bimonthly throughout the year.

Section 648.24 requires NMFS to reduce the butterfish trip limits for vessels issued longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits when butterfish harvest reaches the trip limit reduction threshold to move from phase 1 to phase 2. When butterfish harvest reaches the trip limit reduction threshold to move from phase 1 to phase 2, vessels fishing with a minimum mesh size of 3 inches (76 mm) are prohibited from fishing for, catching, possessing, or landing more than 5,000 lb (2.27 mt) per trip or per day. Trip limits for vessels issued longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits fishing with mesh less than 3 inches (76 mm) remain at 2,500 lb (1.13 mt) of butterfish per trip, and the incidental trip limit remains at 600 mt (0.27 lb).

NMFS is further required to notify the Executive Directors of the Mid-Atlantic, New England, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils; mail notification of the trip limit reduction to all holders of butterfish permits at least 72 hr before the effective date of the trip limit reduction; provide adequate notice of the trip limit reduction to recreational

participants in the fishery; and publish notification of the trip limit reduction in the **Federal Register**.

The Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS, based on dealer reports and other available information, has determined that butterfish harvest has reached the phase 2 trip limit reduction of 47 percent. Therefore, effective 0001 hours, March 18, 2014, the directed butterfish fishery is operating under phase 2, and vessels issued Federal longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits may not fish for, catch, possess or land more than 5,000 lb (2.27 mt) of butterfish per trip or calendar day when fishing with mesh size greater than 3 inches (76 mm). Trip limits for vessels issued longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits fishing with mesh less than 3 inches (76 mm) will remain at 2,500 lb (1.13 mt) of butterfish per trip and the incidental trip limit will remain at 600 lb (0.27 mt). If or when butterfish harvest is projected to reach the phase 3 trip limit reduction threshold specified for 2013, butterfish trip limits for longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit holders will be reduced to 500 lb (0.23 mt), regardless of mesh size used, through a subsequent action in the **Federal Register**.

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648, and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment because it would be contrary to the public interest. This action reduces the butterfish trip limit for vessels issued longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits, under current regulations. The regulations at § 648.24 require such action to ensure that butterfish vessels do not exceed the 2013 DAH. Data indicating the butterfish fleet will have landed at least 50 percent of the 2013 DAH have only recently become available. If NMFS delays the implementation of this trip limit reduction in order to solicit prior public comment, butterfish harvest may continue to increase without sufficient effort control, thereby undermining the conservation objectives of the FMP. The AA further finds, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), good cause to waive the 30-day delayed effectiveness period for the reasons stated above.

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

Dated: March 13, 2014.

Emily H. Menashes,

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. 130925836-4174-02]

RIN 0648-XD181

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels Using Hook-and-Line 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 vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2014 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 13, 2014, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., September 1, 2014.

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 A season allowance of the 2014 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 156 metric tons (mt), as established by the

final 2014 and 2015 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (79 FR 12890, March 6, 2014).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the A season allowance of the 2014 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 126 mt and is setting aside the remaining 30 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 catcher vessels using hook-and-line 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 catcher vessels using hook-and-line 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 March 12, 2014.

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: March 13, 2014.

Emily H. Menashes,
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. 130925836-4174-02]

RIN 0648-XD184

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels Using Hook-and-Line Gear 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 catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 meters (m)) length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2014 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 15, 2014, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., June 10, 2014.

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. Regulations governing sideboard protections for GOA groundfish fisheries appear at subpart B of 50 CFR part 680.

The A season allowance of the 2014 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC)

apportioned to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 2,189 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2014 and 2015 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (79 FR 12890, March 6, 2014).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the A season allowance of the 2014 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 1,189 mt and is setting aside the remaining 1,000 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated 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 catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear 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 directed fishing closure of Pacific cod for catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear in 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 March 12, 2014.

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.