

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

[Docket No. 130925836-4174-02]

RIN 0648-XD545

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch, Northern Rockfish, and Dusky Rockfish 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; modification of closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is opening directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to fully use the total allowable catch of Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 15, 2014, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2014. Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., October 27, 2014.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by FDMS Docket Number NOAA-NMFS-2013-0147, by any of the following methods:

- Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to [www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=\[NOAA-NMFS-2013-0147\]](http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=[NOAA-NMFS-2013-0147]), click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- Mail: Submit written comments to Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record

and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

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.

NMFS closed directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on July 1, 2014 (79 FR 37960, July 3, 2014).

As of September 30, 2014, NMFS has determined that approximately 2,300 metric tons (mt) of Pacific ocean perch, 1,250 mt of northern rockfish, and 295 mt of dusky rockfish TAC remain in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(i)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully utilize the TAC of Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is reopening directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA, effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 15, 2014.

The Administrator, Alaska Region (Regional Administrator) considered the following factors in reaching this decision: (1) The current catch of Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA and, (2) the harvest capacity and stated intent on

future harvesting patterns of vessels in participating in this fishery.

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 opening of directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. Immediate notification is necessary to allow for the orderly conduct and efficient operation of these fisheries, to allow the industry to plan for the fishing season, and to avoid potential disruption to the fishing fleet and processors. NMFS was unable to publish a document providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of October 8, 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.

Without this inseason adjustment, NMFS could not allow these rockfish fisheries the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA to be harvested in an expedient manner and in accordance with the regulatory schedule. Under § 679.25(c)(2), interested persons are invited to submit written comments on this action to the above address until October 27, 2014.

This action is required by § 679.25 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: October 10, 2014.

James P. Burgess,

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

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