

Dated: January 17, 2018.

Samuel D. Rauch, III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for
Regulatory Programs, National Marine
Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the
preamble, 50 CFR part 223 is to be
amended as follows:

PART 223—THREATENED MARINE AND ANADROMOUS SPECIES

■ 1. The authority citation for part 223
continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531–1543; subpart
B, § 223.201–202 also issued under 16 U.S.C.
1361 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 5503(d) for
§ 223.206(d)(9).

■ 2. In § 223.102, amend the table in
paragraph (e) by adding an entry for
“Ray, giant manta” in alphabetical order
under the “Fishes” subheading to read
as follows:

§ 223.102 Enumeration of threatened marine and anadromous species.

* * * * *

(e) * * *

Species ¹		Description of listed entity	Citation(s) for listing determination(s)	Critical habitat	ESA rules
Common name	Scientific name				
*	*	*	*	*	*
Fishes					
*	*	*	*	*	*
Ray, giant manta	<i>Manta birostris</i>	Entire species	83 FR [Insert Federal Register page where the document begins], 1/22/18.	NA	NA
*	*	*	*	*	*

¹ Species includes taxonomic species, subspecies, distinct population segments (DPSs) (for a policy statement, see 61 FR 4722, February 7, 1996), and evolutionarily significant units (ESUs) (for a policy statement, see 56 FR 58612, November 20, 1991).

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 120919470-3513-02]

RIN 0648-XF955

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Shrimp Fishery Off the Southern Atlantic States; Closure of the Penaeid Shrimp Fishery Off South Carolina

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS closes the exclusive
economic zone (EEZ) off South Carolina
in the South Atlantic to trawling for
penaeid shrimp, *i.e.*, brown, pink, and
white shrimp. This closure is necessary
to protect the spawning stock of white
shrimp that has been subject to
unusually cold weather conditions
where state water temperatures have
been 9 °C (48 °F), or less, for at least 7
consecutive days.

DATES: The closure is effective January
17, 2018, until the effective date of a
notification of opening which NOAA
will publish in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Frank Helies, 727-824-5305; email:
Frank.Helies@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The
penaeid shrimp fishery of the South
Atlantic is managed under the Fishery
Management Plan for the Shrimp
Fishery of the South Atlantic Region
(FMP). The FMP was prepared by the
South Atlantic Fishery Management
Council (Council) and is implemented
under the authority of the Magnuson-
Stevens Fishery Conservation and
Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens
Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

Amendment 9 to the FMP revised the
criteria and procedures by which a
South Atlantic state may request a
concurrent closure of the EEZ to the
harvest of penaeid shrimp when state
waters close as a result of severe winter
weather (78 FR 35571, June 13, 2013).
Under 50 CFR 622.206(a), NMFS may
close the EEZ adjacent to South Atlantic
states that have closed their waters to
the harvest of brown, pink, and white
shrimp to protect the white shrimp
spawning stock that has been severely
depleted by cold weather or when
applicable state water temperatures are
9 °C (48 °F), or less, for at least 7
consecutive days. Consistent with those
procedures and criteria, the state of
South Carolina has determined that
unusually cold temperatures have
occurred and that state water
temperatures have been 9 °C (48 °F), or
less, for at least 7 consecutive days and
that these cold weather conditions pose
a risk to the condition and vulnerability
of overwintering white shrimp.

populations in its state waters. South
Carolina closed its waters on January 10,
2018, to the harvest of brown, pink, and
white shrimp, and has requested that
NMFS implement a concurrent closure
of the EEZ off South Carolina. In
accordance with the procedures
described in the FMP, the state of South
Carolina submitted a letter to the NMFS
Regional Administrator (RA) on January
10, 2018, requesting that NMFS close
the EEZ adjacent to South Carolina to
penaeid shrimp harvest as a result of
severe cold weather conditions.

NMFS has determined that the
recommended Federal closure conforms
with the procedures and criteria
specified in the FMP and the Magnuson-
Stevens Act, and, therefore, implements
the Federal closure effective 12:01 a.m.,
local time, January 17, 2018. The
closure will be effective until the ending
date of the closure in South Carolina
state waters, but may be ended earlier
based on a request from the state. NMFS
will terminate the closure of the EEZ by
filing a notification to that effect with
the Office of the Federal Register.

During the closure, as specified in 50
CFR 622.206(a)(2), no person may: (1)
Trawl for brown, pink, or white shrimp
in the EEZ off South Carolina; (2)
possess on board a fishing vessel brown,
pink, or white shrimp in or from the
EEZ off South Carolina unless the vessel
is in transit through the area and all nets
with a mesh size of less than 4 inches
(10.2 cm), as measured between the
centers of opposite knots when pulled
taut, are stowed below deck; or (3) for
a vessel trawling within 25 nautical

miles of the baseline from which the territorial sea is measured, use or have on board a trawl net with a mesh size less than 4 inches (10.2 cm), as measured between the centers of opposite knots when pulled taut.

Classification

The Regional Administrator for the NMFS Southeast Region has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of the spawning stock of white shrimp off South Carolina and is consistent with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.206(a) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the EEZ off South Carolina to trawling for penaeid shrimp constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such procedures would be unnecessary because the rule itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure.

Providing prior notice and opportunity for public comment also is contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect the spawning stock of white shrimp off South Carolina. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially further harm the spawning stock that has been impacted due to cold weather.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

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

Dated: January 17, 2018.

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. 161020985-7181-02]

RIN 0648-XF948

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pacific Cod 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; reallocation.

SUMMARY: NMFS is reallocating the projected unused amount of Pacific cod from vessels using jig gear to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 meters) length overall using hook-and-line or pot gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area. This action is necessary to allow the A season apportionment of the 2018 total allowable catch of Pacific cod to be harvested.

DATES: Effective January 17, 2018, through 2400 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 31, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) 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 apportionment of the 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) specified for vessels using jig gear in the BSAI is 1,529 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017) and inseason adjustment (82 FR 60329, December 20, 2017).

The 2018 Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 meters(m)) length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI is 3,627 mt as established by final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017) and inseason

adjustment (82 FR 60329, December 20, 2017).

The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that jig vessels will not be able to harvest 1,400 mt of the A season apportionment of the 2018 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(7)(ii)(A)(1). Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(a)(7)(iv)(C), NMFS apportions 1,400 mt of Pacific cod from the A season jig gear apportionment to the annual amount specified for catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear.

The harvest specifications for Pacific cod included in final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017) and inseason adjustment (82 FR 60329, December 20, 2017) are revised as follows: 129 mt to the A season apportionment and 1,149 mt to the annual amount for vessels using jig gear, and 5,027 mt to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot 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 jig vessels to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot 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 January 11, 2018.

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