

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 622**

[Docket No. 120919470–3513–02]

RIN 0648–XG294

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

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; reopening.

SUMMARY: NMFS reopens the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off South Carolina in the South Atlantic to trawling for penaeid shrimp, *i.e.*, for brown, pink, and white shrimp. NMFS previously closed penaeid shrimp trawling in the EEZ off South Carolina on January 17, 2018. The reopening is intended to maximize harvest benefits while protecting the penaeid shrimp resource.

DATES: The reopening is effective at 12:01 a.m., local time, June 13, 2018, until the effective date of a notification of a closure which will be published in the **Federal Register**.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Penaeid shrimp in the South Atlantic are 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.

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, after determining that unusually cold temperatures resulted in water temperatures of 9 °C (48 °F), or less, for at least 7 consecutive days in its state waters, the state of South Carolina closed its waters on January 10, 2018, to

the harvest of brown, pink, and white shrimp. South Carolina subsequently requested that NMFS implement a concurrent closure of the EEZ off South Carolina.

NMFS determined that South Carolina's request for an EEZ closure conformed with the procedures and criteria specified in the FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and, therefore, implemented the concurrent EEZ closure effective as of January 17, 2018 (83 FR 2931; January 22, 2018).

During the closure, as specified in 50 CFR 622.206(a)(2), no person could: (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) 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.

The FMP and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 622.206(a) state that: (1) The closure will be effective until the ending date of the closure in the state waters, but may be ended earlier based on the state's request; and (2) if the closure is ended through a state's request, NMFS will terminate the closure of the EEZ by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. The state of South Carolina has requested the EEZ be reopened on June 13, 2018, at the earliest, based on their biological sampling. The state of South Carolina is continuing its monitoring of both water conditions and the penaeid shrimp population in state waters but has not yet determined when the state waters reopening will occur. Therefore, NMFS publishes this notification to reopen the EEZ off South Carolina to the harvest of brown, pink, and white shrimp effective 12:01 a.m., local time, June 13, 2018.

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). Allowing prior notice and opportunity for public comment on the reopening is unnecessary because the rule establishing the reopening procedures has already been subject to

notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the reopening date. Additionally, allowing for prior notice and opportunity for public comment for this reopening is contrary to the public interest because it requires time, thus delaying the removal of a restriction and thereby reducing socio-economic benefits to the shrimp fishery. Also, the FMP procedures and implementing regulations require the penaeid shrimp trawling component based on the state's request, which South Carolina requested to be on June 12, 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.

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).

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

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

Dated: June 13, 2018.

Jennifer M. Wallace,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2018–13020 Filed 6–13–18; 4:15 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

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

[Docket No. 170817779–8161–02]

RIN 0648–XF292

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Alaska Plaice 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; apportionment of reserves; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS apportions amounts of the non-specified reserve to the initial total allowable catch (ITAC) of Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Alaska plaice. This action is necessary to allow the fisheries to continue operating. It is intended to promote the goals and objectives of the fishery management plan for the BSAI management area.

DATES: Effective June 15, 2018, through 2400 hrs, Alaska local time, December 31, 2018. Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., Alaska local time, June 30, 2018.

ADDRESSES: Submit your comments, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2017–0108, by either of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2017-0108>, 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: NMFS may not consider comments if they are sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the comment period ends. All comments received are a part of the public record and NMFS will post the comments 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 is publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 907–586–7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the (BSAI) exclusive economic zone 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 2018 ITAC of BSAI Alaska plaice was established as 13,685 metric tons (mt) by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish of the BSAI (83 FR 8365, February 27, 2018). In accordance with § 679.20(a)(3) the Regional Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has reviewed the most current available data and finds that the ITAC for BSAI Alaska plaice needs to be supplemented from the non-specified reserve to promote efficiency in the utilization of fishery resources in the BSAI and allow fishing operations to continue.

Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(b)(3), NMFS apportions from the non-specified reserve of groundfish 2,415 mt to the BSAI Alaska plaice ITAC in the BSAI management area. This apportionment is consistent with § 679.20(b)(1)(i) and does not result in overfishing of this target species because the revised ITAC is equal to or less than the specifications of the acceptable biological catch in the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (83 FR 8365, February 27, 2018).

The harvest specification for the 2018 ITAC included in the harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI are revised as 16,100 mt for Alaska plaice.

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) and § 679.20(b)(3)(iii)(A) as such a 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 apportionment of the non-specified reserves of groundfish to Alaska plaice in the BSAI. 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 and processors. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of June 12, 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 prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

Under § 679.20(b)(3)(iii), interested persons are invited to submit written comments on this action (see **ADDRESSES**) until June 30, 2018.

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: June 13, 2018.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

[FR Doc. 2018–12977 Filed 6–15–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P