

category for the January 2019 fishery, resulting in a subquota of 100 mt for the January 2019 fishery (75 mt + 25 mt) and 143 mt in the Reserve category (168 mt – 25 mt).

Monitoring and Reporting

NMFS will continue to monitor the BFT fishery closely. Dealers are required to submit landing reports within 24 hours of a dealer receiving BFT. Late reporting by dealers compromises NMFS' ability to timely implement actions such as quota and retention limit adjustment, as well as closures, and may result in enforcement actions. Additionally, and separate from the dealer reporting requirement, General and HMS Charter/Headboat category vessel owners are required to report the catch of all BFT retained or discarded dead within 24 hours of the landing(s) or end of each trip, by accessing hmspermits.noaa.gov or by using the HMS Catch Reporting app, or calling (888) 872-8862 (Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.).

Depending on the level of fishing effort and catch rates of BFT, NMFS may determine that additional action (e.g., quota adjustment or closure) is necessary to ensure available subquotas are not exceeded or to enhance scientific data collection from, and fishing opportunities in, all geographic areas. If needed, subsequent adjustments will be published in the **Federal Register**. In addition, fishermen may call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (978) 281-9260, or access hmspermits.noaa.gov, for updates on quota monitoring and inseason adjustments.

Classification

The Assistant Administrator for NMFS (AA) finds that it is impracticable and contrary to the public interest to provide prior notice of and an opportunity for public comment on, the transfer from the Reserve category to the General category for the following reasons:

The regulations implementing the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments provide for inseason quota transfers to respond to the unpredictable nature of BFT availability on the fishing grounds, the migratory nature of this species, and the regional variations in the BFT fishery. These fisheries are currently underway and the fishery would be closed absent the additional quota. Affording prior notice and opportunity for public comment to implement the quota transfer is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as such a delay would result in further exceedance of the General

category January fishery subquota or earlier closure of the fishery while fish are available on the fishing grounds. Therefore, the AA finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment. For these reasons, there also is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

This action is being taken under §§ 635.15(b) and 635.27(a)(4), (7), (8), and (9), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 25, 2019.

Karen H. Abrams,

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 648

[Docket No. 180209147-8509-02]

RIN 0648-XG696

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Small-Mesh Multispecies Fishery; Inseason Adjustment to the Northern Red Hake Possession Limit

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; inseason adjustment.

SUMMARY: This action reduces that the commercial per-trip possession limit for northern red hake for the remainder of the 2018 fishing year. Regulations governing the small-mesh multispecies fishery require this action because the northern red hake fishery is projected to reach 37.9 percent of its total allowable landing limit for the year. This action is intended to prevent this limit from being exceeded. This announcement also informs the public of the reduced northern red hake possession limit.

DATES: Effective February 27, 2019, through April 30, 2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cynthia Ferrio, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9180.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations governing the red hake fishery are found at 50 CFR part 648. The small-mesh multispecies fishery is managed primarily through a series of

exemptions from the Northeast Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan. The regulations describing the process to adjust inseason commercial possession limits of northern red hake are described in §§ 648.86(d)(4) and 648.90(b)(5). These regulations require the NMFS Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, to reduce the northern red hake possession limit from 3,000 lb (1,361 kg) to the incidental limit of 400 lb (181 kg) when landings have been projected to reach or exceed 37.9 percent of the total allowable landings (TAL), unless such a reduction would be expected to prevent the TAL from being reached. The final rule implementing the small-mesh multispecies specifications for 2018–2020 (83 FR 27713; June 14, 2018) set the northern red hake inseason adjustment threshold for the 2018 fishing year as 228,941 lb (103,846 kg); 37.9 percent of the northern red hake TAL for the year.

Based on commercial landings data reported through February 13, 2019, the northern red hake fishery is projected to reach 37.9 percent of the TAL on February 22, 2019. Using this projection, NMFS is required to reduce the commercial northern red hake possession limit to prevent the TAL from being exceeded. Therefore, effective February 27, 2019, no person may possess on board or land more than 400 lb (181 kg) of northern red hake per trip for the remainder of the fishing year (i.e., through April 30, 2019).

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, finds good cause under 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 per-trip possession limit for northern red hake to the incidental limit of 400 lb (181 kg) until April 30, 2019, under current small-mesh multispecies fishery regulations. The regulations at § 648.86(d) require such action to ensure that commercial small-mesh multispecies vessels do not exceed the TAL set for the northern red hake stock. If implementation of this reduction was delayed, the northern red hake TAL for this fishing year may be exceeded, thereby undermining the conservation objectives of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Therefore, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), the Assistant Administrator further finds good cause to waive the 30-day delayed

effectiveness period for the reason stated above.

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

Dated: February 22, 2019.

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. 170816769-8162-02]

RIN 0648-XG724

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Trawl Catcher Vessels 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 trawl 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 2019 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 25, 2019, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., June 10, 2019.

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 2019 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 1,443 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (83 FR 8768, March 1, 2018).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the A season allowance of the 2019 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 1,300 mt and is setting aside the remaining 143 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 trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the

GOA. While this closure is effective 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 directed fishing closure of Pacific cod by catcher vessels 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 February 22, 2019.

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: February 22, 2019.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

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