

representatives, state agency partners, media, and other constituents on the final rule, notifying fishers that we would be conducting numerous workshops and training sessions for skimmer trawl fishers, and that information on these sessions would be posted on our website at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/bycatch/turtle-excluder-device-regulations>.

We are now delaying the effective date of the final rule published on December 20, 2019, (84 FR 70048) until August 1, 2021. Safety and travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have limited our ability to complete the in-person workshops and training sessions that we had anticipated and communicated to the public. This delay in effective date is necessary to provide us with additional time to conduct our planned outreach and training for fishers through a modified strategy, including but not limited to, virtual training sessions with the public. In addition to generally educating the public on the use of the devices, it will help prepare us for responding to installation and maintenance problems from industry when the regulations go in effect. This will allow fishers to be better prepared for compliance with regulations and reduce the likelihood of potential increased sea turtle deaths caused by widespread use of improperly constructed and/or installed TEDs.

Administrative Procedure Act

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries (AA) finds that there is 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), because prior notice and opportunity for public comment on this temporary delay is unnecessary and would be contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule that published at 84 FR 70048 on December 20, 2019, has already been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of this delay in the effective date of the previously noticed regulations. Providing additional prior notice and opportunity for public comment is contrary to the public interest because there is a need to implement immediately this action to delay the April 1, 2021, effective date of the final rule and to provide notice of the delay to affected fishery participants. Making the requirements effective before fishers are properly educated and trained regarding the devices could lead to improper installation and use, which

could lead to greater harm to listed sea turtles. We are temporarily delaying the effective date of the rule (see **DATES** section) to provide us with additional time to promote compliance with the new regulations.

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

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

Dated: March 25, 2021.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 210210-0018; RTID 0648-XA913]

Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Groundfish Fishery by Non-Rockfish Program Catcher Vessels Using Trawl Gear in the Western and 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 groundfish, other than pollock, by non-Rockfish Program catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2021 Chinook salmon prohibited species catch limit established for non-Rockfish Program catcher vessels using trawl gear and directed fishing for groundfish, other than pollock, in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 26, 2021, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2021.

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.

The 2021 Chinook salmon prohibited species catch (PSC) limit for non-Rockfish Program catcher vessels directed fishing for groundfish, other than pollock, using trawl gear in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA is 3,060 Chinook salmon (§ 679.21(h)(4)(i)(C)).

In accordance with § 679.21(h)(8)(ii), the Regional Administrator has determined that the 2021 Chinook salmon PSC limit established for non-Rockfish Program catcher vessels directed fishing for groundfish, other than pollock, using trawl gear in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for groundfish (except for pollock) by non-Rockfish Program catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA.

While this closure is effective the maximum retainable amounts at 50 CFR 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR part 679, which was issued pursuant to section 304(b), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment would be 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 is prohibiting directed fishing for groundfish, other than pollock, by non-Rockfish Program catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas 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 25, 2021.

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

Dated: March 25, 2021.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

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