

and HMS Charter/Headboat permitted vessels with a commercial sale endorsement when fishing commercially for BFT and is taken consistent with the regulations at § 635.28(a)(1).

#### Waiver for Remaining June Through August RFDs

On May 31, 2024 (89 FR 47095), NMFS published a final rule, which among other things, implemented RFDs every Sunday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday from July 1 through November 30, 2024. Since the fishery will be closed for the remainder of the June through August time period, NMFS has decided to waive the previously-scheduled RFDs for the remainder of that time period. Previously-scheduled RFDs (*i.e.*, every Sunday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday) will resume on September 1, 2024.

With the RFDs waived during a closure, consistent with § 635.23(a)(7) fishermen aboard General category permitted vessels and HMS Charter/Headboat permitted vessels may tag and release BFT of all sizes, subject to the requirements of the catch-and-release and tag-and-release programs at § 635.26. All BFT that are released must be handled in a manner that will maximize their survival, and without removing the fish from the water, consistent with requirements at § 635.21(a)(1). For additional information on safe handling, see the "Careful Catch and Release" brochure available at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/outreach-and-education/careful-catch-and-release-brochure/>.

#### Monitoring and Reporting

NMFS will continue to monitor the BFT fisheries closely. Per § 635.5(b)(2)(i)(A), 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 adjustments, 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 per § 635.5(a)(4) to report their own catch of all BFT retained or discarded dead within 24 hours of the landing(s) or end of each trip, by accessing <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov>, using the HMS Catch Reporting app, or calling 888-872-8862 (Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.).

After the fishery reopens on September 1, depending on the level of

fishing effort and catch rates of BFT, NMFS may determine that additional adjustments are necessary to ensure available subquotas are not exceeded or to enhance scientific data collection from, and fishing opportunities in, all geographic areas as specified under § 635.27(a)(7). If needed, subsequent adjustments will be published in the **Federal Register**. In addition, fishermen may access <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov>, for updates on quota monitoring and inseason adjustments.

#### Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1855(d)) and regulations at 50 CFR part 635 and this action is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

The Assistant Administrator for NMFS (AA) finds that pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), it is impracticable and contrary to the public interest to provide prior notice of, and an opportunity for public comment on this action, for the following reasons. Specifically, the regulations implementing the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments provide for inseason retention limit adjustments and fishery closures 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. Providing for prior notice and an opportunity to comment is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as this fishery is currently underway and, based on the most recent landings information, the available time period subquota is projected to be reached shortly. Delaying this action could result in BFT landings that exceed the June through August time period subquota, which may result in future potential quota reductions for other BFT categories, depending on the magnitude of a potential overharvest. Taking this action does not raise conservation and management concerns and would support effective management of the BFT fishery. NMFS notes that the public had an opportunity to comment on the underlying rulemakings that established the U.S. BFT quota and the inseason adjustment and closure criteria.

For all of the above reasons, the AA also finds that pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d), there is good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effective date.

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

Dated: August 20, 2024.

**Kelly Denit,**

*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. 240227-0061; RTID 0648-XE061]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher/Processors Using Trawl Gear in the 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 retention of Pacific cod by catcher/processors using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the 2024 total allowable catch of Pacific cod allocated to catcher/processors using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), August 20, 2024, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2024.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Krista Milani, 907-581-2062.

**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 (Magnuson-Stevens Act). Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR parts 600 and 679.

The 2024 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod allocated to catcher/processors using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 635 metric tons as established by the final 2024 and 2025 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (89 FR 15484, March 4, 2024).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS

(Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2024 TAC of Pacific cod allocated to catcher/processors using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that Pacific cod caught by catcher/processors using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(a)(2).

#### 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 prohibiting the retention of Pacific cod by catcher/processors using trawl gear in the Central 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 August 19, 2024.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA 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.

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

Dated: August 19, 2024.

**Lindsay Fullenkamp,**

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

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