

Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher/processor vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI.

After the effective date of this closure 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 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 closure of the fisheries under the 2005 A season directed fishing allowance of Pacific cod specified for catcher/processor vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI.

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 23, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover

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

[FR Doc. 05-3933 Filed 2-24-05; 2:33 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 041126333-5040-02; I.D. 022305D]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Prohibiting Directed Fishing for Specified Groundfish Fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by specified sectors in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2005 A season allowances of the Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) specified for Pacific cod in the GOA.

DATES: Effective February 24, 2005, through 12 noon, Alaska local time, September 1, 2005.

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.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that if the amount of a target species apportioned to a fishery or, with respect to Pacific cod, to an inshore or offshore component allocation, will be reached, the Regional Administrator may establish a directed fishing allowance for that species or species group.

As established by the 2005 and 2006 final harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (70 FR 8958, February 24, 2005), the 2005 A season allowance of the Pacific cod TAC for vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 8,471 metric tons (mt); for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 941 mt; and for processing by the offshore component of the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 1,505 mt. See § 679.20(c)(1)(iii), § 679.20(c)(4)(ii), and § 679.20(a)(11).

In accordance with 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator has determined that the A season directed fishing allowances for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA, Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA, and Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA

have been reached and the remaining amounts of the A season TAC allowances are necessary as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries until the next seasonal apportionments of Pacific cod become available September 1, 2005. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for these fisheries.

After the effective date of this closure 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 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 closures of the directed fisheries for Pacific cod for specified sectors in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA.

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 23, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover

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

[FR Doc. 05-3934 Filed 2-24-05; 2:33 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[I.D. 022305B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Sablefish Managed Under the Individual Fishing Quota Program

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Fishing season dates.

SUMMARY: NMFS is opening directed fishing for sablefish with fixed gear managed under the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. The season will open 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 27, 2005, and will close 1200 hrs, A.l.t., November 15, 2005. This period is the same as the 2005 IFQ and Community Development Quota season for Pacific halibut adopted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). The IFQ halibut season is specified by a separate publication in the **Federal Register** of annual management measures pursuant to 50 CFR 300.62.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 27, 2005, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., November 15, 2005.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Beginning in 1995, fishing for Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) and sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*) with fixed gear in the IFQ regulatory areas defined in § 679.2 has been managed under the IFQ Program. The IFQ Program is a regulatory regime designed to promote the conservation and management of these fisheries and to further the objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Northern Pacific Halibut Act. Persons holding quota share receive

an annual allocation of IFQ. Persons receiving an annual allocation of IFQ are authorized to harvest IFQ species within specified limitations. Further information on the implementation of the IFQ Program, and the rationale supporting it, are contained in the preamble to the final rule implementing the IFQ Program published in the **Federal Register** on November 9, 1993 (58 FR 59375) and subsequent amendments.

This announcement is consistent with § 679.23(g)(1), which requires that the directed fishing season for sablefish managed under the IFQ program be specified by the Administrator, Alaska Region, and announced by publication in the **Federal Register**. This method of season announcement was selected to facilitate coordination between the sablefish season, chosen by the Administrator, Alaska Region, and the halibut season, chosen by the IPHC. The directed fishing season for sablefish with fixed gear managed under the IFQ program will open 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 27, 2005, and will close 1200 hrs, A.l.t., November 15, 2005. This period runs concurrently with the IFQ season for Pacific halibut announced by the IPHC. The IFQ halibut season will be specified by a separate publication in the **Federal Register** of annual management measures pursuant to 50 CFR 300.62.

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 opening of the sablefish fishery thereby increasing bycatch and regulatory discards between the sablefish fishery and the halibut fishery, and preventing the accomplishment of the management objective for simultaneous opening of these two fisheries.

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 § 679.23 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: February 23, 2005.

Alan D. Risenhoover

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service
[FR Doc. 05-3935 Filed 2-24-05; 2:33 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S