

projected to be reached, by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. NMFS has determined the 2017 recreational ACT will be reached by March 24, 2017. Accordingly, NMFS is closing recreational harvest of greater amberjack for the rest of the 2017 fishing year effective at 12:01 a.m., local time, March 24, 2017, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2018, the start of the next fishing year.

During the recreational closure, the bag and possession limits for greater amberjack in or from the Gulf EEZ are zero. The prohibition on possession in the Gulf on board a vessel for which a valid Federal charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish has been issued applies regardless of whether greater amberjack were harvested in state or Federal waters.

**Classification**

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of Gulf greater amberjack and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.41(a)(2)(i) and (ii) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries (AA) finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the recreational sector for greater amberjack constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment on this temporary rule pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), because such procedures are unnecessary and

contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule establishing the closure provisions was subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Such procedures are contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect greater amberjack. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially allow the recreational sector to exceed the recreational ACL.

For the aforementioned 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. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: March 17, 2017.

**Jennifer M. Wallace,**  
*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. 151211999-6343-02]

RIN 0648-XF256

**Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; Trip Limit Increase for the Common Pool Fishery**

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; inseason adjustment.

**SUMMARY:** This action increases the possession and trip limit for Gulf of Maine cod and haddock for Northeast multispecies common pool vessels for the remainder of the 2016 fishing year.

The most recent catch data indicate that the common pool is not expected to fully harvest its annual quota for these stocks at the current trip limits. Increasing the possession and trip limits is intended to provide the common pool fishery with additional fishing opportunities through the end of the fishing year.

**DATES:** The possession and trip limit increase is effective March 16, 2017, through April 30, 2017.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Spencer Talmage, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9232.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The regulations at § 648.86(o) authorize the Regional Administrator to adjust the possession and trip limits for common pool vessels in order to help prevent the overharvest or underharvest of the common pool quotas.

Based on information reported through February 18, 2017, the common pool fishery has caught approximately 42 and 25 percent of its annual quotas for Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and GOM haddock, respectively. At the current rate of fishing, the common pool fishery is not projected to fully harvest its annual quota for either stock by the end of the 2016 fishing year. A moderate increase in the possession and trip limits for both stocks will provide additional opportunities with little risk of exceeding the common pool sub-ACL of either stock.

To allow the common pool fishery to catch more of its quota for this GOM cod and haddock, effective March 16, 2017, the possession and trip limit of GOM cod and GOM haddock are increased, as summarized in Table 1 below. Common pool groundfish vessels that have declared their trip through the vessel monitoring system (VMS) or interactive voice response system, and crossed the VMS demarcation line prior to March 16, 2017, may land at the new possession and trip limits for that trip.

TABLE 1—NEW POSSESSION/TRIP LIMITS

Stock	Permit type	Current possession/trip limits	New possession/trip limits
GOM cod .....	Day-At-Sea (DAS) .....	25 lb (11.34 kg) per DAS, up to 100 lb (45.36 kg) per trip.	100 lb (45.36 kg) per trip.
	Handgear A .....	25 lb (11.34 kg) per trip .....	100 lb (45.36 kg) per trip.
	Handgear B .....	25 lb (11.34 kg) per trip .....	unchanged.
	Small Vessel Category	25 lb (11.34 kg) per trip, within combined 300 lb trip limit for GOM cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder.	unchanged.
GOM haddock ...	.....	200 lb (90.72 kg) per DAS, up to 600 lb (272.16 kg) per trip.	500 lb (226.80 kg) per DAS, up to 1,000 lb (453.59 kg) per trip.

Weekly quota monitoring reports for the common pool fishery can be found on our Web site at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/MultiMonReports.htm>. We will continue to monitor common pool catch through vessel trip reports, dealer-reported landings, VMS catch reports, and other available information and, if necessary, we will make additional adjustments to common pool management measures.

#### 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 pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) and 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment and the 30-day delayed effectiveness period because it would be impracticable and contrary to the public interest.

The regulations at § 648.86(o) authorize the Regional Administrator to adjust the Northeast multispecies possession and trip limits for common pool vessels in order to help prevent the overharvest or underharvest of the pertinent common pool quotas. The catch data used as the basis for this action only recently became available. The available analysis indicates that the possession and trip limit increase for both GOM cod and GOM haddock will help to ensure that the fishery may achieve the optimum yield (OY) for these stocks. As a result, the time necessary to provide for prior notice and comment, and a 30-day delay in effectiveness, would prevent NMFS from implementing the necessary possession and trip limit adjustment in a timely manner, which could prevent the fishery from achieving the OY, and cause negative economic impacts to the common pool fishery.

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

Dated: March 16, 2017.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

[FR Doc. 2017-05550 Filed 3-16-17; 4:15 pm]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 161020985-7181-02]

RIN 0648-XF296

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Northern Rockfish 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; modification of closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is opening directed fishing for northern rockfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI). This action is necessary to fully use the 2016 total allowable catch (TAC) of northern rockfish in the BSAI.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 16, 2017, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2017. Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., April 5, 2017.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2016-0140, by either of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to [www.regulations.gov/#/docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0140](http://www.regulations.gov/#/docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0140), 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:* Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (*e.g.*, name, address), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be 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 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.

Pursuant to the final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017), NMFS closed the directed fishery for northern rockfish under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii).

As of March 14, 2017, NMFS has determined that approximately 4,000 metric tons of northern rockfish initial TAC remains unharvested in the BSAI. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(i)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully utilize the 2017 TAC of northern rockfish in the BSAI, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is opening directed fishing for northern rockfish in the BSAI. This will enhance the socioeconomic well-being of harvesters in this area. The Administrator, Alaska Region (Regional Administrator) considered the following factors in reaching this decision: (1) The current catch of northern rockfish in the BSAI and, (2) the harvest capacity and stated intent on future harvesting patterns of vessels in participating in this fishery.

#### 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 § 679.25(c)(1)(ii) 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 northern rockfish in the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent,