

Small Entity Compliance Guide

Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 states that, for each rule or group of related rules for which an agency is required to prepare a FRFA, the agency shall publish one or more guides to assist small entities in complying with the rule, and shall designate such publications as “small entity compliance guides.” The agency shall explain the actions a small entity is required to take to comply with a rule or group of rules. As part of this rulemaking process, NMFS will send a small entity compliance guide to interested parties via the groundfish email list server. In addition, copies of this final rule and guides (*i.e.*, information bulletins) are available from NMFS at the following website: <http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/>.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 660

Fisheries, Fishing, and Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: March 23, 2018.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

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

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 660 is amended as follows:

PART 660—FISHERIES OFF WEST COAST STATES

■ 1. The authority citation for part 660 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*, and 16 U.S.C. 7001 *et seq.*

■ 2. In § 660.351, add in alphabetical order the definition of “long-leader gear” as follows:

§ 660.351 Recreational fishery—definitions.

Long-leader gear (also known as Holloway gear) means fishing gear with the following: One fishing line, deployed with a sinker and no more than three hooks, with a minimum of 30 feet (9.14 meters) between the sinker and the lowest hook, and a non-compressible float attached to the line above the hooks. The gear may be equipped with artificial lures and flies less than or equal to 5 inches in length. Natural bait, and lures or flies greater than 5 inches in length, may not be used.

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■ 3. In § 660.360, paragraphs (c)(2)(i)(B) and (c)(2)(iii)(B) are revised to read as follows:

§ 660.360 Recreational fishery—management measures.

* * * * *

(c) * * *

(2) * * *

(i) * * *

(B) *Recreational rockfish conservation area (RCA)*. Fishing for groundfish with recreational gear is prohibited within the recreational RCA, a type of closed area or groundfish conservation area. It is unlawful to take and retain, possess, or land groundfish taken with recreational gear within the recreational RCA. A vessel fishing in the recreational RCA may not be in possession of any groundfish. [For example, if a vessel fishes in the recreational salmon fishery within the RCA, the vessel cannot be in possession of groundfish while within the RCA. The vessel may, however, on the same trip fish for and retain groundfish shoreward of the RCA on the return trip to port.] Off Oregon, from April 1 through September 30, recreational fishing for groundfish is prohibited seaward of a recreational RCA boundary line approximating the 40 fm (73 m) depth contour, except that fishing for flatfish (other than Pacific halibut) is allowed seaward of the 40 fm (73 m) depth contour when recreational fishing for groundfish is permitted, and fishing with long-leader gear (as defined in § 660.351) is allowed seaward of the 40 fm (73 m) depth contour (*i.e.*, within the RCA) from April 1 through September 30. Coordinates for the boundary line approximating the 40 fm (73 m) depth contour are listed at § 660.71.

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(iii) * * *

(B) *Lingcod*. There is a 3 fish limit per day for lingcod from January 1 through December 31. The minimum size for lingcod retained in the Oregon recreational fishery is 22 in (56 cm) total length. For vessels using long-leader gear (as defined in § 660.351) and fishing inside the recreational RCA, possession of lingcod is prohibited.

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[FR Doc. 2018–06316 Filed 3–28–18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 170817779–8161–02]

RIN 0648–XG120

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 a 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 2018 total allowable catch (TAC) of northern rockfish in the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 26, 2018, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2018. Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., April 10, 2018.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by *NOAA–NMFS–2017–0108*, by either of the following methods:

- *Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.* Go to: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2017-0108>, 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 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 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (83 FR 8365, February 27, 2018), NMFS closed directed fishing for northern rockfish under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii).

As of March 21, 2018, NMFS has determined that approximately 4,800 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 2018 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, relevant data only became available as of March 21, 2018.

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.

Without this inseason adjustment, NMFS could not allow the fishery for northern rockfish in the BSAI to be harvested in an expedient manner and in accordance with the regulatory schedule. Under § 679.25(c)(2), interested persons are invited to submit written comments on this action to the above address until April 10, 2018.

This action is required by §§ 679.20 and 679.25 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 26, 2018.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

[FR Doc. 2018-06330 Filed 3-26-18; 4:15 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P