

and all that remains is to notify the public of the recreational closure for golden tilefish for the remainder of the 2018 fishing year. Prior notice and opportunity for comment are contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect the golden tilefish resource. Time required for notice and public comment would allow for continued recreational harvest and further exceedance of 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: August 23, 2018.

**Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,**

*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 679

[Docket No. 170816769-8162-02]

RIN 0648-XG394

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels Greater Than or Equal to 50 Feet Length Overall Using Hook-and-Line 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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the annual allowance of the 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 1, 2018, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2018.

**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. Regulations governing sideboard protections for GOA groundfish fisheries appear at subpart B of 50 CFR part 680.

The annual allowance of the 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 404 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (83 FR 8768, March 1, 2018).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the annual allowance of the 2018 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 344 mt and is setting aside the remaining 60 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. While this closure is effective 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 directed fishing closure of Pacific cod by catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line 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 22, 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.

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: August 23, 2018.

**Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,**

*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 679

[Docket No. 170817779-8161-02]

RIN 0648-XG429

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod 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; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 meters) length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line or pot gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI). This action is necessary to fully use the 2018 total allowable catch of Pacific cod allocated to catcher vessels less than 60 feet LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 1, 2018, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2018. Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., September 12, 2018.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit your comments, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2017–0108, by either of the following methods:

- *Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.* Go to [www.regulations.gov#!/docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2017-0108](http://www.regulations.gov#!/docketDetail;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:* NMFS may not consider comments if they are sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the comment period ends. All comments received are a part of the public record, and NMFS will post the comments 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 is publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Obren Davis, 907–586–7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone 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 parts 600 and 679.

NMFS closed directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on January 23, 2018 (83 FR 3626, January 26, 2018).

NMFS has determined that as of August 22, 2018, approximately 742 metric tons of Pacific cod remain in the 2018 Pacific cod apportionment for catcher vessels less than 60 feet LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(i)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully use the 2018 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod in the BSAI, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI. The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) considered the following factors in reaching this decision: (1) The current catch of Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear 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) 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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI. Immediate notification is necessary to allow for the orderly conduct and efficient operation of this fishery, to allow the industry to plan for the fishing season, and to avoid potential disruption to the fishing fleet and processors. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of August 22, 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 Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear 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 September 12, 2018.

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

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

Dated: August 23, 2018.

**Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,**  
*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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