

Dated: October 29, 2019.

Margaret E. Everson,

Principal Deputy Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Exercising the Authority of the Director, For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

[FR Doc. 2019-24124 Filed 11-4-19; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[RTID 0648-XX020]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Quota Transfer From NC to RI and VA

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

ACTION: Notification of quota transfer.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the State of North Carolina is transferring a portion of its 2019 commercial summer flounder quota to the State of Rhode Island and the Commonwealth of Virginia. This quota adjustment is necessary to comply with the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provisions. This announcement informs the public of the revised commercial quotas for North Carolina, Virginia, and Rhode Island.

DATES: Effective November 4, 2019, through December 31, 2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Laura Hansen, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9225.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery are found in 50 CFR 648.100 through 648.110. These regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from Maine through North Carolina. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state is described in § 648.102 and final 2019 allocations were published on May 17, 2019 (84 FR 22392).

The final rule implementing Amendment 5 to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan, as published in the **Federal Register** on December 17, 1993 (58 FR 65936), provided a mechanism for transferring summer flounder commercial quota from one state to another. Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the NMFS Greater

Atlantic Regional Administrator, can transfer or combine summer flounder commercial quota under § 648.102(c)(2). The Regional Administrator is required to consider three criteria in the evaluation of requests for quota transfers or combinations: The transfer or combinations would preclude the overall annual quota from being fully harvested, the transfer addresses an unforeseen variation or contingency in the fishery, and the transfer is consistent with the objectives of the GMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

North Carolina is transferring 23,481 lb (10,651 kg) and 7,706 lb (3,495 kg) of summer flounder commercial quota to Rhode Island and Virginia, respectively, through mutual agreement of the states. These transfers were requested to repay landings made by North Carolina-permitted vessels in Rhode Island and Virginia under safe harbor agreements. Based on the revised Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Specifications, the revised summer flounder quotas for fishing year 2019 are now: North Carolina, 2,926,555 lb (1,327,463 kg); Rhode Island, 1,745,943 lb (9,1946 kg); and Virginia, 2,398,416 lb (1,087,903 kg).

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

Dated: October 29, 2019.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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. 180831813-9170-02]

RIN 0648-XY053

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pacific Cod in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; reallocation.

SUMMARY: NMFS is reallocating the projected unused amounts of Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) from catcher vessels using trawl gear to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear, catcher/processors using trawl gear, vessels using jig gear, and vessels using pot gear in the Western Regulatory Area

of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to allow the 2019 TAC of Pacific cod in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA to be harvested.

DATES: Effective November 1, 2019 through 2400 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 31, 2019.

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.

The 2019 Pacific cod TAC specified for catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 73 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019).

The 2019 Pacific cod TAC specified for catcher/processors using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 125 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019).

The 2019 Pacific cod TAC specified for vessel using jig gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 134 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019).

The 2019 Pacific cod TAC specified for vessels using pot gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 1,980 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019).

The 2019 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 2,000 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019). The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that catcher vessels using trawl gear will not be able to harvest 330 mt of the 2019 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A)(3).

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(12)(ii)(B), the Regional Administrator has also determined that catcher vessels using hook-and-line

gear, catcher/processors using trawl gear, vessels using jig gear, and vessels using pot gear currently have the capacity to harvest this excess allocation. Therefore, NMFS apportions 330 mt of Pacific cod from the trawl catcher vessel apportionment to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear, catcher/processors using trawl gear, vessels using jig gear, and vessels using pot gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

The harvest specifications for Pacific cod in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA included in the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019) are revised as follows: 1,670 mt to catcher vessels using trawl gear, 155 mt to catcher/processors using trawl gear, 108 mt to vessels using hook-and-line gear, 184 mt to vessels using jig gear, and 2,195 mt to vessels using pot gear.

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 reallocations of Pacific cod in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. Since the fishery is currently open, it is important to immediately inform the industry as to the revised allocations. 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 as well as processors. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of October 28, 2019.

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: October 31, 2019.

Ngagne Jafnar Gueye,

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

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