

in 2019 and, therefore, help ensure the 2020 allocation is not exceeded.

Delaying implementation to allow for public comment could result in confusion amongst industry if the new limit is implemented shortly after the start of the season on April 1.

Additionally, if the new limit is not implemented until closer to the end of the season after a full rulemaking the sablefish primary fishery north of Point Chehalis would likely exceed its 2020 allocation of halibut. Therefore, providing a comment period for this action could limit the benefits to the fishery, and the vessels that participate in it as they rely on the halibut retention allowance throughout the entire season.

Therefore, the NMFS finds reason to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(1) so that this final rule may become effective upon publication in the **Federal Register**. The adjustments to management measures in this document affect commercial fisheries by decreasing the incidental halibut retention limit in the sablefish primary fishery north of Point Chehalis, WA. This adjustment was requested by the Council's advisory bodies, as well as members of industry during the Council's March 2020 meeting, and recommended unanimously by the Council. No aspect of this action is controversial, and changes of this nature were anticipated in the biennial harvest specifications and management measures established through a notice and comment rulemaking for 2019–2020 (82 FR 63970).

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 660

Fisheries, Fishing, Indian fisheries.

Dated: March 20, 2020.

Hélène M.N. Scalliet,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, 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 § 660.231, revise paragraph (b)(3)(iv) to read as follows:

§ 660.231 Limited entry fixed gear sablefish primary fishery.

* * * * *

(b) * * *

(3) * * *

(iv) Incidental Pacific halibut retention north of Pt. Chehalis, WA

(46°53.30' N. lat.). From April 1 through October 31, vessels authorized to participate in the sablefish primary fishery, licensed by the International Pacific Halibut Commission for commercial fishing in Area 2A (waters off Washington, Oregon, California), and fishing with longline gear north of Pt. Chehalis, WA (46°53.30' N. lat.) may possess and land up to 200 pounds (91 kg) dressed weight of Pacific halibut for every 1,000 pounds (454 kg) dressed weight of sablefish landed and up to 2 additional Pacific halibut in excess of the 200-pounds-per-1,000-pound limit per landing. "Dressed" Pacific halibut in this area means halibut landed eviscerated with their heads on. Pacific halibut taken and retained in the sablefish primary fishery north of Pt. Chehalis may only be landed north of Pt. Chehalis and may not be possessed or landed south of Pt. Chehalis.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 200221-0062; RTID 0648-XY091]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in the West Yakutat District in the Gulf of Alaska

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 pollock in the West Yakutat District of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to fully use the 2020 total allowable catch of pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 24, 2020, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2020. Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., April 7, 2020.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by FDMS Docket Number NOAA-NMFS-2019-0102 by any 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-2019-

0102, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

• **Mail:** Address written comments to Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Records Office. 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 NMFS will post the comments for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), 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: 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 2020 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA is 5,554 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (85 FR 13802, March 10, 2020).

NMFS closed directed fishing for pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on March 13, 2020 (85 FR 15392, March 18, 2020).

As of March 17, 2020, NMFS has determined that approximately 780 mt of pollock remains in the West Yakutat District of the GOA. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(i)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully utilize the 2020 TAC of pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is reopening directed fishing for pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA, effective 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 24, 2020.

The Administrator, Alaska Region (Regional Administrator) considered the following factors in reaching this

decision: (1) The catch of pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA 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 pollock in the West Yakutat District 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 March 17, 2020.

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

pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA 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 7, 2020.

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: March 20, 2020.

Hélène M.N. Scalliet,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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