

would maintain the current level of the fee at 1.25 percent of the ex-vessel value of the fish landings subject to the fee. Alternative 2 included fee options up to 2 percent, that would be applied equally across all fisheries included in the program (*i.e.*, gear types). Alternative 3 included fee options up to 2 percent that would be implemented differentially across the fisheries included in the program (*i.e.*, gear types). This action increases the observer fee to 1.65 percent of ex-vessel value for all landings subject to the observer fee. Some of the fee levels considered under Alternatives 2 and 3 would have implemented a fee percentage lower than this action for some or all directed regulated or directly affected small entities. However, the Council recommendation to increase the observer fee is necessary to increase fee revenues to deploy observers and EM at coverage rates adequate to meet the Council's and NMFS' monitoring objectives in future years. In addition, the Council recommended and NMFS agrees that a single observer fee percentage applied equally to the ex-vessel value of all of the landed catch subject to the observer fee continues to be fair and equitable.

#### *Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Other Compliance Requirements*

This action does not contain recordkeeping, reporting, or other compliance requirements.

#### **List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 679**

Alaska, Fisheries, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Observers.

Dated: June 22, 2020.

**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 679 is amended as follows:

#### **PART 679—FISHERIES OF THE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE OFF ALASKA**

■ 1. The authority citation for 50 CFR part 679 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 1801 *et seq.*; 3631 *et seq.*; Pub. L. 108–447; Pub. L. 111–281.

■ 2. In § 679.55, revise paragraph (f) to read as follows:

#### **§ 679.55 Observer fees.**

\* \* \* \* \*

(f) *Observer fee percentage.* The observer fee percentage is 1.25 percent through December 31, 2020. Beginning

January 1, 2021, the observer fee percentage is 1.65 percent.

\* \* \* \* \*

[FR Doc. 2020–13775 Filed 7–9–20; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

#### **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

#### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

#### **50 CFR Part 679**

[Docket No. 200702–0176]

**RIN 0648–BJ49**

#### **Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reclassifying Sculpin Species in the Groundfish Fisheries of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska**

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

**ACTION:** Final rule.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS issues regulations to implement Amendment 121 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Management Area (BSAI FMP) and Amendment 110 to the FMP for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) (GOA FMP), collectively referred to as Amendments 121/110. This final rule prohibits directed fishing for sculpins by federally permitted groundfish fishermen and specifies a sculpin retention limit in the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries. This action is necessary to properly classify sculpins in the BSAI and GOA FMPs. This final rule is intended to promote the goals and objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), Amendments 121/110, the BSAI and GOA FMPs, and other applicable laws.

**DATES:** Effective August 10, 2020.

**ADDRESSES:** Electronic copies of the Environmental Assessment and the Regulatory Impact Review (collectively referred to as the “Analysis”) prepared for this final rule may be obtained from [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

Electronic copies of the Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analyses for the BSAI and GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications for 2020–2021 may be obtained from [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

Written comments regarding the burden-hour estimates or other aspects of the collection-of-information requirements contained in this final rule may be submitted via mail to NMFS

Alaska Region, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802–1668, Attn: Glenn Merrill; in person at NMFS Alaska Region, 709 West 9th Street, Room 401, Juneau, AK; via internet on [www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain](http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain). Find this particular information collection by selecting “Currently under Review—Open for Public Comments” or by using the search function.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Megan Mackey, 907–586–7228.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

#### **Authority for Action**

NMFS manages the groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the BSAI and GOA under the BSAI and GOA FMPs (the FMPs), respectively. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) prepared the FMPs under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.* Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the BSAI and GOA FMPs appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679.

This final rule implements Amendments 121/110 to the BSAI and GOA FMPs, respectively. The Council submitted Amendments 121/110 for review by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), and a Notice of Availability (NOA) of Amendments 121/110 was published in the **Federal Register** on March 23, 2020, with comments invited through May 22, 2020 (85 FR 16310). The proposed rule to implement Amendments 121/110 was published in the **Federal Register** on April 23, 2020 with comments invited through May 26, 2020 (85 FR 22703). NMFS received three comment letters from three members of the public. The comments are summarized and responded to under the heading “Comments and Responses” below.

A detailed review of the provisions and rationale for this action is provided in the preamble to the proposed rule (85 FR 22703; April 23, 2020) and is briefly summarized in this final rule.

#### **Background**

In October 2019, the Council voted to recommend Amendments 121/110 to reclassify sculpins as non-target ecosystem component (EC) species, not in need of conservation and management. Sculpins are currently classified as target species in the FMPs, though as discussed below, sculpins are currently only caught incidental to other target fisheries. To implement Amendments 121/110, NMFS proposes regulations to prohibit directed fishing for sculpins by federally permitted groundfish fishermen and to specify a

sculpin retention limit in the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries. The following sections of this preamble provide (1) groundfish stock classification in the FMPs and a brief history of this final action; (2) the National Standards (NS) guidance for determining which species require conservation and management; (3) a description of Amendments 121/110; (4) the regulatory changes made by this final rule; and (5) the comments received and NMFS responses to those comments.

#### *Stock Classification in FMPs and a Brief History of This Final Action*

Among other requirements, FMPs must comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act NS (16 U.S.C. 1851). NMFS has implemented regulations to provide guidance on the interpretation and application of these NS. Relevant to this final rule, the NS guidelines at 50 CFR 600.305(d)(11), (12) and (13) define three classifications for stocks in an FMP: (1) Target stocks in need of conservation and management that fishers seek to catch; (2) non-target stocks in need of conservation and management that are caught incidentally during the pursuit of target stocks; and (3) EC species that do not require conservation and management, but may be listed in an FMP in order to achieve ecosystem management objectives.

Sculpins are currently classified as target species in the groundfish FMPs and directed fishing for sculpins is allowed. However, sculpins are not a target species for any groundfish fishery in the BSAI or GOA. Sculpins are only caught incidentally to other target groundfish species. Sculpins are incidentally caught primarily in the BSAI by vessels using trawl gear directed fishing for yellowfin sole, rock sole, and Atka mackerel, as well as by vessels directed fishing for Pacific cod with hook-and-line, pot, and trawl gear (Table 3–4 and Table 3–5 of the Analysis). Sculpins are caught primarily in the GOA by vessels in the Pacific cod and shallow-water flatfish directed fisheries, and IFQ halibut fisheries (Table 3–6 of the Analysis).

For both the BSAI and GOA, sculpins are managed as a Tier 5 species, which is the least preferred method of specifying an overfishing limit when limited biological reference points are available. Only Tier 6 species, for which no biological reference points are available, are below Tier 5 in terms of limited information available. Nonetheless, specification of OFL for Tier 5 species reflects the best estimate possible for sculpins with the available

data. As described in Section 3.2.3 of the Analysis, model estimates of sculpin abundance in the BSAI and GOA have been fairly stable over the years with no conservation concerns apparent.

Stock assessments provide the scientific basis for determining whether a stock is experiencing overfishing (*i.e.*, when a stock's recent harvest rate exceeds sustainable levels) or overfished (*i.e.*, already depleted), and for calculating a sustainable harvest rate and forecasting catches that correspond to that rate. For stocks in Tiers 4–6, no determination can be made of overfished status or approaching an overfished condition as information is insufficient to estimate the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) stock level. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the sculpin complex is overfished or whether it is approaching an overfished condition because it is managed under Tier 5. However, in the absence of directed fishing, they are very unlikely to be overfished. Sculpins, in general, are not retained. As noted in Section 3.2.2 of the Analysis, sculpin catch has been substantially below ABC and OFL, and has been a small proportion of the biomass each year.

#### *Determining Which Species Require Conservation and Management*

Section 302(h)(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires a council to prepare an FMP for each fishery under its authority that is in need of conservation and management. "Conservation and management" is defined in section 3(5) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The NS guidelines at § 600.305(c) (revised on October 18, 2016; 81 FR 718585) provide direction for determining which stocks will require conservation and management and provide direction to regional councils and NMFS for how to consider these factors in making this determination. Specifically, the guidelines direct regional councils and NMFS to consider a non-exhaustive list of ten factors when deciding whether stocks require conservation and management.

Section 2.2.1 in the Analysis considers each of the 10 factors' relevance to sculpins. One of the factors a Council must consider when determining whether a stock requires conservation and management is whether maintaining it as a target species will improve or maintain the condition of the stock. The analysis shows that while sculpins are currently classified as a target species in the FMPs, there has been no directed fishing for sculpins since they were included in the FMPs. Sculpins are not

important to commercial, recreational, or subsistence users, nor are they important to the National or regional economy. There are no developing fisheries for sculpins in the EEZ off Alaska nor in waters of the State of Alaska. Because there is no directed fishing and incidental fishing-related mortality is low, there is very little probability that sculpins will become overfished. Sculpins are very unlikely to be in need of rebuilding, and are not targeted as a major food product in Alaska. There are no conservation concerns for sculpins since they are not targeted, are rarely retained, and future uses of sculpins remain available. Therefore, maintaining sculpins as a target species in the BSAI and GOA FMPs is not likely to change stock condition.

#### *Amendments 121/110*

In October of 2019, the Council recommended, and NMFS now implements, Amendments 121/110 to reclassify sculpins as EC category species in the FMPs. Based on a review of the best available scientific information, and after considering NS guidelines, the Council and NMFS determined that sculpins are not in need of conservation and management, and that classifying sculpins in the EC category is an appropriate action. While the Council determined that sculpins are not in need of conservation and management as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the NS guidelines, the Council and NMFS determined that there are benefits to retaining sculpins as an EC species complex in the FMPs because they are a component of the ecosystem as benthic predators.

Amendments 121/110 will establish the sculpins EC species complex in the groundfish FMPs to clarify that they are non-target species and not in need of conservation and management. Recordkeeping and reporting requirements will be maintained to monitor the effects of incidental catch of sculpins in the groundfish fisheries. Amendments 121/110 will allow NMFS to prohibit directed fishing for sculpins and limit the retention and commercial sale of sculpins. Commercial sale of retained sculpins will be allowed, subject to MRAs, only if the retained catch is processed into fishmeal, in accordance with current Federal regulations at § 679.20(i)(5). The limitation on processing and sale of EC species as anything other than fishmeal is status quo for all species moved to the EC; however, the Council is considering changing this limitation for squid and may also consider it for sculpin species

to allow them to be processed and sold in other product forms, and that would be addressed with a subsequent action. By virtue of being classified as EC species, catch specifications for sculpins (*i.e.*, OFLs, ABCs, and TACs) will no longer be required.

Though the Council determined, and NMFS concurs, that sculpins are not in need of conservation and management, sculpin population status and bycatch should be monitored to continually assess vulnerability of sculpins to the groundfish fisheries. Therefore, this final rule retains recordkeeping and reporting requirements for sculpin bycatch. This final rule prohibits directed fishing for sculpins to meet the intent of Amendments 121/110 that sculpins are not a target species complex. Because the definition of directed fishing at § 679.2 is based on a MRA, this final rule specifies a retention limit for sculpins so that NMFS could implement the prohibition on directed fishing to meet the intent of Amendments 121/110.

#### Final Rule

In addition to classifying sculpins as an EC species in the FMPs under Amendments 121/110, the Council recommended and NMFS issues regulations to limit and monitor the incidental catch of sculpins. This final rule will—

- Prohibit directed fishing for sculpins in the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries;
- Maintain recordkeeping and reporting of sculpins in the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries, but modify the regulations for clarity; and
- Specify a sculpins retention limit, or MRA, of 20 percent in the BSAI and GOA Federal groundfish fisheries.

To prohibit directed fishing, this final rule revises §§ 679.20(i) and 679.22(i) to prohibit directed fishing for sculpins at all times in the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries.

To clarify definitions, this final rule adds a definition for sculpins at § 679.2 and adds an instruction to § 679.5 to use the sculpin species code in Table 2c to 50 CFR part 679 (Table 2c) to record and report sculpin catch. These revisions will maintain NMFS' ability to monitor the catch, retention, and discard of sculpins.

Section 679.20 provides the general limitations for the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries. Because a TAC will no longer be specified for sculpins, this final rule will remove sculpins from § 679.20(b)(2), which specifies the amount of the TAC that is reserved for inseason management flexibility.

The MRA is the proportion or percentage of retained catch of a species closed for directed fishing (incidental catch species) to the retained catch of a species open for directed fishing (basis species). This final rule will move sculpins out of the basis species category and into the incidental catch species category consistent with the prohibition on directed fishing for sculpins under this final rule.

In developing this final rule, the Council and NMFS considered a range of sculpins MRA percentages: 2 Percent, 10 percent, and 20 percent. Sculpins, in general, are not retained, and fishery observer data indicate that the retention rate has been below 10 percent in the BSAI and below 20 percent in the GOA. As noted in Section 3.2.2 of the Analysis, sculpin catch has been substantially below ABC and OFL, and has been a small proportion of the biomass each year. Because there are no conservation concerns for sculpins and retention of sculpins has been low, a lower MRA will not further discourage targeting, but may result in increased regulatory discards of sculpins. Therefore, the Council recommended and NMFS specifies a MRA for sculpins of 20 percent in both the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries.

#### Comments and Responses

NMFS received three unique comments from three members of the public on the proposed rule, with only two comments being relevant to this action. Therefore, only those two comments are addressed here.

*Comment 1:* NMFS should prohibit commercial fishing and only permit subsistence fishing.

*Response:* This comment is outside of the scope of this action. This final rule addresses the management of sculpins and is not intended to broadly manage commercial or subsistence fisheries. NMFS manages commercial, recreational and subsistence fisheries consistent with the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law.

*Comment 2:* This regulation is necessary for the proper and prompt performance of the functions of NMFS. It should be implemented right away, especially if this action will be located in wetlands.

*Response:* NMFS acknowledges the comment and is implementing this final rule in a timely manner. This action only pertains to fisheries in the marine environment and has no applicability to wetlands.

#### Changes From the Proposed Rule

No changes were made from the proposed rule.

#### Classification

Pursuant to section 304(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this final rule is consistent with Amendments 121/110, other provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable laws.

This final rule has been determined to be not significant for the purposes of Executive Order 12866.

This final rule is not an Executive Order 13771 regulatory action because this rule is not significant under Executive Order 12866.

#### Regulatory Impact Review (RIR)

An RIR was prepared to assess all costs and benefits of available regulatory alternatives. A copy of this analysis is available from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**). NMFS implements Amendments 121/110 and the regulatory revisions in this final rule based on those measures that maximized net benefits to the Nation. Specific aspects of the economic analysis are discussed below in the Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis section.

#### Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (FRFA)

This section contains the FRFA for this final rule. Section 604 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) requires that, when an agency promulgates a final rule under section 553 of Title 5 of the U.S. Code, after being required by that section or any other law to publish a general notice of proposed rulemaking, the agency shall prepare a FRFA. Section 604 describes the required contents of a FRFA: (1) A statement of the need for and objectives of the rule; (2) a statement of the significant issues raised by the public comments in response to the IRFA, a statement of the assessment of the agency of such issues, and a statement of any changes made in the proposed rule as a result of such comments; (3) the response of the agency to any comments filed by the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration (SBA) in response to the proposed rule, and a detailed statement of any changes made to the proposed rule in the final rule as a result of the comments; (4) a description of and an estimate of the number of small entities to which the rule will apply or an explanation of why no such estimate is available; (5) a description of the projected reporting, recordkeeping, and other compliance requirements of the

rule, including an estimate of the classes of small entities that will be subject to the requirement and the type of professional skills necessary for preparation of the report or record; and (6) a description of the steps the agency has taken to minimize the significant economic impact on small entities consistent with the stated objectives of applicable statutes including a statement of the factual, policy, and legal reasons for selecting the alternative adopted in this final rule and why each one of the other significant alternatives to the rule considered by the agency which affect the impact on small entities was rejected.

A description of this final rule and the need for and objectives of the rule are contained in the preamble to this final rule and the preamble to the proposed rule (85 FR 22703, April 23, 2020), and are not repeated here.

#### Public and Chief Counsel for Advocacy Comments on the Proposed Rule

NMFS published the proposed rule on April 23, 2020. An IRFA was prepared and summarized in the "Classification" section of the preamble to the proposed rule. The comment period closed on May 26, 2020, for the proposed rule and on May 22, 2020, for the notice of availability for the amendments. NMFS received three unique comments from three members of the public on the proposed rule and Amendments 121/110. The Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the SBA did not file any comments on the proposed rule. NMFS received no comments specifically on the IRFA.

#### Number and Description of Small Entities Regulated by This Final Rule

This final rule directly regulates any vessel operator harvesting sculpins in the federally managed groundfish fisheries in the BSAI and GOA. The thresholds applied to determine if an entity or group of entities are "small" under the RFA depend on the industry classification for the entity or entities. Businesses classified as primarily engaged in commercial fishing are considered small entities if they have combined annual gross receipts not in excess of \$11.0 million for all affiliated operations worldwide (50 CFR 200.2). The most recent estimates of the number of fishing vessels participating in the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries that are small entities are provided in Table 2 in the IRFAs for the BSAI and GOA Harvest Specifications for 2020–2021 (see **ADDRESSES**). In 2018, there were 182 catcher vessels and 3 catcher/processors in the BSAI, and 756 catcher vessels and 3 catcher/processors in the GOA. These estimates likely overstate the number of

small entities in the groundfish fisheries off Alaska because some of these vessels are affiliated through common ownership or membership in a cooperative and the affiliated vessels together would exceed the \$11.0 million annual gross receipts threshold for small entities.

For operators of vessels currently participating in these fisheries, the economic impacts of this final rule are primarily beneficial or neutral. Removing sculpins from the BSAI target species category will remove the sculpins TAC from inclusion in the 2 million metric ton optimum yield (OY) cap in the BSAI. The amount of the OY cap that has been reserved for sculpins will be available to increase the TAC limit or limits for other BSAI target species. This effect will benefit participants in the BSAI fisheries that experience TAC increases relative to what the TACs would have been without this final rule. Some of the entities that experience benefits from increased TACs in the future may be small entities. The effects on target species TACs will be neutral for the GOA fisheries, as the OY has not constrained TACs in the GOA to date. Therefore, removing the sculpins TAC in the GOA will not allow for an increase in the TAC for another target species.

The only potential adverse economic impact that has been identified for this final rule is that vessel owners or operators who may wish to conduct directed fishing for sculpins in the future, and who may wish to retain more sculpins than they would be allowed to retain under the 20 percent MRA, will not be able to do so. This potential adverse impact will not affect any current participants relative to opportunities available to them because there has been no directed fishing for sculpins. Therefore, no current participants will lose an economic opportunity that is available to them today or has been available to them.

#### Recordkeeping, Reporting, and Other Compliance Requirements

Under this final rule, requirements for recording and reporting the catch and discard of sculpins in logbooks or on catch or production reports will be maintained as they are in existing regulations. The final rule will make only minor modifications to clarify the recordkeeping and reporting requirements in § 679.5, Table 2a to 50 CFR part 679, and Table 2c to 50 CFR part 679. Therefore, moving sculpins from the target species category to the EC category will not change recordkeeping and reporting costs for

fishery participants or impose any additional or new costs on participants.

#### Duplicate, Overlapping, or Conflicting Federal Rules

No duplication, overlap, or conflict between this final rule and existing Federal rules has been identified.

#### Description of Significant Alternatives That Minimize Adverse Impacts on Small Entities

The Council and NMFS considered two alternatives. Among the two alternatives, Alternative 2 Option 3 (the preferred alternative) provides the most economic benefits to current participants in the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries. The primary economic benefit of this final rule is to reduce the potential constraints imposed by the OFLs, ABCs, and TACs for sculpins on BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries. Among the three options considered for the sculpins MRA (2 percent, 10 percent, and 20 percent), the 20 percent MRA that was selected minimizes the economic impact on any fishing vessel that is a small entity because it provides the greatest opportunity to retain sculpins as incidental catch in other groundfish fisheries.

Alternative 1 is the no action alternative and would have continued to classify sculpins as target species in the groundfish FMPs. OFLs, ABCs, and TACs would have continued to be set for sculpins as a species group in both the BSAI and GOA. Relative to Alternative 2, Alternative 1 could be considered less beneficial to small entities because all catch specifications would need to be maintained, and current constraints on the BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries would continue. However, Alternative 2 (this final rule) also could be considered more restrictive to small entities than Alternative 1 if the prohibition on directed fishing for sculpins under the final rule limits future participants' ability to conduct directed fishing for sculpins more so than would occur under the status quo. Alternative 1 would have allowed NMFS to determine annually whether to open a directed fishery for sculpins.

Alternative 2 classifies sculpins in the BSAI and GOA in the EC category and implements a regulation prohibiting directed fishing for sculpins that can only be revised through subsequent rulemaking. However, the Council recommended and NMFS concurs that the benefits of the final rule to current fishery participants, including small entities, outweigh the potential future adverse impacts of the prohibition

against directed fishing for sculpins. In addition, this provision can be re-evaluated by the Council and NMFS in the future if fishery participants want to develop directed fisheries for sculpins.

*Collection-of-Information Requirements*

This final rule contains a collection-of-information requirement subject to review and approval by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). This requirement has been submitted to OMB for approval under OMB Control Numbers 0648–0213 and 0648–0515. This final rule will make minor revisions to the information collection requirements to clarify the location of the species code for sculpins in the tables to 50 CFR part 679 to note that sculpins should be reported as non-target EC species rather than target species. The requirements for recording and reporting the catch and discard of sculpins in logbooks or on catch or production reports will not change. These minor revisions do not change the public reporting burden or costs.

Send comments on these or any other aspects of the collection of information to NMFS Alaska Region (see ADDRESSES), or to OIRA by visiting [www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain](http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain). Find this particular information collection by selecting “Currently under Review—Open for Public Comments: Or by using the search function.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, and no person shall be subject to penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number. All currently approved NOAA collections of information may be viewed at <http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRASearch#>.

**List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 679**

Alaska, Fisheries, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: July 6, 2020.

**Samuel D. Rauch III,**

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

For reasons set out in the preamble, NMFS amends 50 CFR part 679 as follows:

**PART 679—FISHERIES OF THE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE OFF ALASKA**

■ 1. The authority citation for part 679 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 1801 *et seq.*; 3631 *et seq.*; Public Law 108–447; Public Law 111–281.

■ 2. In § 679.2, add a definition for “Sculpins” in alphabetical order to read as follows:

**§ 679.2 Definitions.**

\* \* \* \* \*  
*Sculpins* (see Table 2c to this part and § 679.20(i)).  
 \* \* \* \* \*

■ 3. In § 679.5, revise paragraphs (a)(3) introductory text, (c)(3)(vi)(F), and (c)(4)(vi)(E) to read as follows:

**§ 679.5 Recordkeeping and reporting (R&R).**

(a) \* \* \*  
 (3) *Fish to be recorded and reported.* The operator or manager must record and report the following information (see paragraphs (a)(3)(i) through (iv) of this section) for all groundfish (see Table 2a to this part), prohibited species (see Table 2b to this part), forage fish (see Table 2c to this part), grenadiers (see Table 2c to this part), squids (see Table 2c to this part), and sculpins (see Table 2c to this part). The operator or manager may record and report the following information (see paragraphs (a)(3)(i) through (iv) of this section) for non-groundfish (see Table 2d to this part):  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 (c) \* \* \*  
 (3) \* \* \*  
 (vi) \* \* \*  
 (F) *Species codes.* The operator must record and report required information for all groundfish (see Table 2a to this part), prohibited species (see Table 2b to this part), forage fish (see Table 2c to this part), grenadiers (see Table 2c to this part), squids (see Table 2c to this part), and sculpins (see Table 2c to this part). The operator may record and report information for non-groundfish (see Table 2d to this part).  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 (4) \* \* \*  
 (vi) \* \* \*  
 (E) *Species codes.* The operator must record and report required information

for all groundfish (see Table 2a to this part), prohibited species (see Table 2b to this part), forage fish (see Table 2c to this part), grenadiers (see Table 2c to this part), squids (see Table 2c to this part), and sculpins (see Table 2c to this part). The operator may record and report information for non-groundfish (see Table 2d to this part).  
 \* \* \* \* \*

■ 4. In § 679.20, revise paragraphs (b)(2) introductory text, (i) heading, and (i)(3) through (5) to read as follows:

**§ 679.20 General limitations.**

\* \* \* \* \*  
 (b) \* \* \*  
 (2) *GOA.* Initial reserves are established for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, octopuses, and sharks, which are equal to 20 percent of the TACs for these species or species groups.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

(i) *Forage fish, grenadiers, squids, and sculpins.* \* \* \*

(3) *Closure to directed fishing.* Directed fishing for forage fish, grenadiers, squids, and sculpins is prohibited at all times in the BSAI and GOA.

(4) *Limits on sale, barter, trade, and processing.* The sale, barter, trade, or processing of forage fish, grenadiers, squids, and sculpins is prohibited, except as provided in paragraph (i)(5) of this section.

(5) *Allowable fishmeal production.* Retained catch of forage fish, grenadiers, squids, or sculpins not exceeding the maximum retainable amount may be processed into fishmeal for sale, barter, or trade.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

■ 5. In § 679.22, revise paragraph (i) to read as follows:

**§ 679.22 Closures.**

\* \* \* \* \*  
 (i) *Forage fish, grenadiers, squids, and sculpins closures.* See § 679.20(i)(3).

■ 6. Revise Table 2a to part 679 to read as follows:

TABLE 2a TO PART 679—SPECIES CODES: FMP GROUND FISH

Species description	Code
Atka mackerel (greenling) .....	193
Flatfish, miscellaneous (flatfish species without separate codes) .....	120
FLOUNDER:	

TABLE 2a TO PART 679—SPECIES CODES: FMP GROUND FISH—Continued

Species description	Code
Alaska plaice .....	133
Arrowtooth .....	121
Bering .....	116
Kamchatka .....	117
Starry .....	129
Octopuses .....	870
Pacific cod .....	110
Pollock .....	270
ROCKFISH:	
Aurora ( <i>Sebastes aurora</i> ) .....	185
Black (BSAI) ( <i>S. melanops</i> ) .....	142
Blackgill ( <i>S. melanostomus</i> ) .....	177
Blue (BSAI) ( <i>S. mystinus</i> ) .....	167
Bocaccio ( <i>S. paucispinis</i> ) .....	137
Canary ( <i>S. pinniger</i> ) .....	146
Chilipepper ( <i>S. goodei</i> ) .....	178
China ( <i>S. nebulosus</i> ) .....	149
Copper ( <i>S. caurinus</i> ) .....	138
Darkblotched ( <i>S. crameri</i> ) .....	159
Dusky ( <i>S. variabilis</i> ) .....	172
Greenstriped ( <i>S. elongatus</i> ) .....	135
Harlequin ( <i>S. variegatus</i> ) .....	176
Northern ( <i>S. polyspinis</i> ) .....	136
Pacific Ocean Perch ( <i>S. alutus</i> ) .....	141
Pygmy ( <i>S. wilsoni</i> ) .....	179
Quillback ( <i>S. maliger</i> ) .....	147
Redbanded ( <i>S. babcocki</i> ) .....	153
Redstripe ( <i>S. proriger</i> ) .....	158
Rosethorn ( <i>S. helvomaculatus</i> ) .....	150
Rougheye ( <i>S. aleutianus</i> ) .....	151
Sharpchin ( <i>S. zacentrus</i> ) .....	166
Shortbelly ( <i>S. jordani</i> ) .....	181
Shortraker ( <i>S. borealis</i> ) .....	152
Silvergray ( <i>S. brevispinis</i> ) .....	157
Splitnose ( <i>S. diploproa</i> ) .....	182
Stripetail ( <i>S. saxicola</i> ) .....	183
Thornyhead (all <i>Sebastolobus</i> species) .....	143
Tiger ( <i>S. nigrocinctus</i> ) .....	148
Vermilion ( <i>S. miniatus</i> ) .....	184
Widow ( <i>S. entomelas</i> ) .....	156
Yelloweye ( <i>S. ruberrimus</i> ) .....	145
Yellowmouth ( <i>S. reedi</i> ) .....	175
Yellowtail ( <i>S. flavidus</i> ) .....	155
Sablefish (blackcod) .....	710
SHARKS:	
Other (if salmon, spiny dogfish or Pacific sleeper shark—use specific species code) .....	689
Pacific sleeper .....	692
Salmon .....	690
Spiny dogfish .....	691
SKATES:	
Alaska ( <i>Bathyraja parmifera</i> ) .....	703
Aleutian ( <i>B. aleutica</i> ) .....	704
Whiteblotched ( <i>B. maculate</i> ) .....	705
Big ( <i>Raja binoculata</i> ) .....	702
Longnose ( <i>R. rhina</i> ) .....	701
Other (if Alaska, Aleutian, whiteblotched, big, or longnose skate—use specific species code) .....	700
SOLE:	
Butter .....	126
Dover .....	124
English .....	128
Flathead .....	122
Petrals .....	131
Rex .....	125
Rock .....	123
Sand .....	132
Yellowfin .....	127
Turbot, Greenland .....	134

■ 7. Revise Table 2c to part 679 to read as follows:

TABLE 2c TO PART 679—SPECIES CODES: FMP FORAGE FISH SPECIES (ALL SPECIES OF THE FOLLOWING FAMILIES), GRENADIER SPECIES, SQUIDS, AND SCULPINS

Species identification	Code
FORAGE FISH:	
Bristlemouths, lightfishes, and anglemouths (family <i>Gonostomatidae</i> ) .....	209
Capelin smelt (family <i>Osmeridae</i> ) .....	516
Deep-sea smelts (family <i>Bathylagidae</i> ) .....	773
Eulachon smelt (family <i>Osmeridae</i> ) .....	511
Gunnels (family <i>Pholidae</i> ) .....	207
Krill (order <i>Euphausiacea</i> ) .....	800
Lanternfishes (family <i>Myctophidae</i> ) .....	772
Pacific Sand fish (family <i>Trichodontidae</i> ) .....	206
Pacific Sand lance (family <i>Ammodytidae</i> ) .....	774
Pricklebacks, war-bonnets, eelblennys, cockscombs and Shannys (family <i>Stichaeidae</i> ) .....	208
Surf smelt (family <i>Osmeridae</i> ) .....	515
GRENADIERS:	
Giant Grenadiers ( <i>Albatrossia pectoralis</i> ) .....	214
Other Grenadiers .....	213
SQUID:	
Squids .....	875
SCULPINS:	
Sculpins .....	160

■ 8. Revise Table 10 to part 679 to read as follows:

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

Table 10 to Part 679—Gulf of Alaska Retainable Percentages.

BASIS SPECIES		INCIDENTAL CATCH SPECIES (for DSR caught on catcher vessels in the SFO, see § 679.20 (j) <sup>6</sup> )											Sculpins						
Code	Species	Pollock	Pacific cod	DW Flat (2)	Rex sole	Flathead sole	SW Flat (3)	Arrow-tooth	Sablefish	Aggregated rockfish <sup>(7)</sup>	SR/RE ERA (1)	DSR SEO (C/Ps only) (5)	Alaska mackerel	Aggregated forage fish <sup>(9)</sup>	Skates (10)	Other species (6)	Grenadiers (12)	Squids	Sculpins
110	Pacific cod	20	n/a <sup>(9)</sup>	20	20	20	20	35	1	5	(1)	10	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
121	Arrowtooth	5	5	20	20	20	20	n/a	1	5	0	0	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
122	Flathead sole	20	20	20	20	n/a	20	35	7	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
125	Rex sole	20	20	20	n/a	20	20	35	7	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
136	Northern rockfish	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	7	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
141	Pacific ocean perch	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	7	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
143	Thornyhead	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	7	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
152/151	Shortraker/rougheye (1)	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	7	15	n/a	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
193	Alaska mackerel	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	1	5	(1)	10	n/a	2	5	20	8	20	20
270	Pollock	n/a	20	20	20	20	20	35	1	5	(1)	10	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
710	Sablefish	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	n/a	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
	Flatfish, deep-water <sup>(2)</sup>	20	20	n/a	20	20	20	35	7	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
	Flatfish, shallow-water <sup>(3)</sup>	20	20	20	20	20	n/a	35	1	5	(1)	10	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
	Rockfish, other <sup>(4)</sup>	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	7	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
172	Dusky rockfish	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	7	15	7	1	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
	Rockfish, DSR-SEO <sup>(5)</sup>	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	7	15	7	n/a	20	2	5	20	8	20	20
	Skates <sup>(10)</sup>	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	1	5	(1)	10	20	2	n/a	20	8	20	20
	Other species <sup>(6)</sup>	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	1	5	(1)	10	20	2	5	n/a	8	20	20
	Aggregated amount of non-groundfish species <sup>(11)</sup>	20	20	20	20	20	20	35	1	5	(1)	10	20	2	5	20	8	20	20



Notes to Table 10 to Part 679

1	Shortraker/rougheye rockfish			
	SR/RE	<i>Sebastes borealis</i> (shortraker) (152)		
	SR/RE ERA	<i>S. aleutianus</i> (rougheye) (151)		
Where an MRA is not indicated, use the MRA for SR/RE included under Aggregated Rockfish				
2	Deep-water flatfish	Dover sole (124), Greenland turbot (134), Kamchatka flounder (117), and deep-sea sole		
3	Shallow-water flatfish	Flatfish not including deep-water flatfish, flathead sole (122), rex sole (125), or arrowtooth flounder (121)		
4	Other rockfish	Western Regulatory Area	means other rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish	
		Central Regulatory Area		
		West Yakutat District		
		Southeast Outside District		
		Other rockfish		
5	Demersal shelf rockfish (DSR)	<i>S. aurora</i> (aurora) (185)	<i>S. variegates</i> (harlequin)(176)	<i>S. brevispinis</i> (silvergrey)(157)
		<i>S. melanostomus</i> (blackgill)(177)	<i>S. wilsoni</i> (pygmy)(179)	<i>S. diploproa</i> (splitnose)(182)
		<i>S. paucispinis</i> (bocaccio)(137)	<i>S. babcocki</i> (redbanded)(153)	<i>S. saxicola</i> (stripetail)(183)
		<i>S. goodei</i> (chilipepper)(178)	<i>S. proriger</i> (redstripe)(158)	<i>S. miniatus</i> (vermillion)(184)
		<i>S. crameri</i> (darkblotch)(159)	<i>S. zacentrus</i> (sharpchin)(166)	<i>S. reedi</i> (yellowmouth)(175)
		<i>S. elongatus</i> (greenstriped)(135)	<i>S. jordani</i> (shortbelly)(181)	
		<i>S. entomelas</i> (widow)(156)	<i>S. flavidus</i> (yellowtail)(155)	
		In the Eastern Regulatory Area only, Other rockfish also includes <i>S. polyispinis</i> (northern)(136)		
		<i>S. pinniger</i> (canary)(146)	<i>S. maliger</i> (quillback)(147)	<i>S. ruberrimus</i> (yelloweye)(145)
		<i>S. nebulosus</i> (China)(149)	<i>S. hevomaculatus</i> (rosethorn)(150)	
<i>S. caurinus</i> (copper)(138)	<i>S. nigrocinctus</i> (tiger)(148)			
DSR-SEO = Demersal shelf rockfish in the Southeast Outside District (SEO). Catcher vessels in the SEO have full retention of DSR (see § 679.20(i)).				
6	Other species	Sharks (689)		
7	Aggregated rockfish	Aggregated rockfish (see § 679.2) means any species of the genera <i>Sebastes</i> or <i>Sebastolobus</i> except <i>Sebastes ciliatus</i> (dark rockfish), <i>Sebastes melanops</i> (black rockfish), and <i>Sebastes mystinus</i> (blue rockfish), except in:		
		Southern Outside District where DSR is a separate species group for those species marked with an MRA Eastern Regulatory Area where SR/RE is a separate species group for those species marked with an MRA		
8	n/a	Not applicable		

Notes to Table 10 to Part 679		
9	Aggregated forage fish (all species of the following taxa)	Bristlemouths, lightfishes, and anglemouths (family <i>Gonostomatidae</i> ) 209 Capelin smelt (family <i>Osmeridae</i> ) 516 Deep-sea smelts (family <i>Bathylagidae</i> ) 773 Eulachon smelt (family <i>Osmeridae</i> ) 511 Gunnels (family <i>Pholidae</i> ) 207 Krill (order <i>Euphausiacea</i> ) 800 Laternfishes (family <i>Myctophidae</i> ) 772 Pacific Sand fish (family <i>Trichodontidae</i> ) 206 Pacific Sand lance (family <i>Ammodytidae</i> ) 774 Pricklebacks, war-bonnets, eelblennys, cockscombs and shannys (family <i>Stichaeidae</i> ) 208 Surf smelt (family <i>Osmeridae</i> ) 515 Alaska ( <i>Bathyraja. Parmifera</i> ) 703 Aleutian ( <i>B. aleutica</i> ) 704 Whiteblotched ( <i>Raja binoculata</i> ) 705 Big Skates ( <i>Raja binoculata</i> ) 702 Longnose Skates ( <i>R. rhina</i> ) 701 Other Skates ( <i>Rathyraja</i> and <i>Raja spp.</i> ) 700
10	Skates Species and Groups	All legally retained species of fish and shellfish, including IFQ halibut, that are not listed as FMP groundfish in Tables 2a and 2c to this part.
11	Aggregated non-groundfish	Giant grenadiers ( <i>Albatrossia pectoralis</i> ) 214 Other grenadiers (all grenadiers that are not Giant grenadiers) 213
12	Grenadiers	

BILLING CODE 3510-22-C

■ 9. Revise Table 11 to part 679 to read as follows:

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

Table 11 to Part 679—BSAI Retainable Percentages.

BASIS SPECIES		INCIDENTAL CATCH SPECIES																		
Code	Species	Pollock	Pacific cod	Atka mackerel	Alaska plaice	Arrowtooth	Kamchatka	Yellowfin sole	Other flatfish <sup>2</sup>	Rock sole	Flathead sole	Greenland turbot	Sablefish <sup>1</sup>	Short-raker/rougheye	Aggregated rockfish <sup>6</sup>	Squids <sup>7</sup>	Aggregated forage fish <sup>7</sup>	Other species <sup>4</sup>	Grenadiers <sup>7</sup>	Sculpins <sup>7</sup>
110	Pacific cod	20	na <sup>5</sup>	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	1	1	2	5	20	2	20	8	20
121	Arrowtooth	20	20	20	20	na	20	20	20	20	20	7	1	2	5	20	2	3	8	20
117	Kamchatka	20	20	20	20	20	na	20	20	20	20	7	1	2	5	20	2	3	8	20
122	Flathead sole	20	20	20	35	35	35	35	35	35	na	35	15	7	15	20	2	20	8	20
123	Rock sole	20	20	20	35	35	35	35	35	na	35	1	1	2	15	20	2	20	8	20
127	Yellowfin sole	20	20	20	35	35	35	na	35	35	35	1	1	2	5	20	2	20	8	20
133	Alaska Plaice	20	20	20	na	35	35	35	35	35	35	1	1	2	5	20	2	20	8	20
134	Greenland turbot	20	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	na	15	7	15	20	2	20	8	20
136	Northern Pacific Ocean perch	20	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	35	15	7	15	20	2	20	8	20
141	Pacific Ocean perch	20	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	35	15	7	15	20	2	20	8	20
152/151	Shortraker/Rougheye	20	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	35	15	na	5	20	2	20	8	20
193	Atka mackerel	20	20	na	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	1	1	2	5	20	2	20	8	20
270	Pollock	na	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	1	1	2	5	20	2	20	8	20
710	Sablefish	20	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	35	na	7	15	20	2	20	8	20
	Other flatfish <sup>2</sup>	20	20	20	35	35	35	35	na	35	35	1	1	2	5	20	2	20	8	20
	Other rockfish <sup>3</sup>	20	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	35	15	7	15	20	2	20	8	20
	Other species <sup>4</sup>	20	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	1	1	2	5	20	2	na	8	20
	Aggregated amount non-groundfish species <sup>8</sup>	20	20	20	20	35	35	20	20	20	20	1	1	2	5	20	2	20	8	20

<sup>1</sup> **Sablefish:** for fixed gear restrictions, see § 679.7(f)(3)(ii) and (f)(11).

<sup>2</sup> **Other flatfish** includes all flatfish species, except for Pacific halibut (a prohibited species), flathead sole, Greenland turbot, rock sole, yellowfin sole, Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder and Kamchatka flounder.

<sup>3</sup> **Other rockfish** includes all “rockfish” as defined at § 679.2, except for Pacific ocean perch; and northern, shortraker, and rougheye rockfish.

<sup>4</sup> The **Other species** includes sharks, skates, and octopuses.

<sup>5</sup> **na** = not applicable

<sup>6</sup> **Aggregated rockfish** includes all “rockfish” as defined at § 679.2, except shortraker and rougheye rockfish.

<sup>7</sup> **Forage fish, grenadiers, squids, and sculpins** are all defined at Table 2c to this part.

<sup>8</sup> All legally retained species of fish and shellfish, including CDQ halibut and IFQ halibut that are not listed as FMP groundfish in Tables 2a and 2c to this part.