

objectives of the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments. (§ 635.27(a)(8)(v) and (vi)). Another principal consideration is the objective of providing opportunities to harvest the full annual U.S. BFT quota without exceeding it based on the goals of the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments, including to achieve optimum yield on a continuing basis and to optimize the ability of all permit categories to harvest their full BFT quota allocations (related to § 635.27(a)(8)(x)).

Based on the considerations above, NMFS is transferring 129.2 mt from the Reserve category to the General category. Therefore, NMFS adjusts the General category December subquota to 50.0 mt for the 2018 General category fishing season and adjusts the Reserve category quota to 13.7 mt. The 2018 General category fishery reopens December 1, 2018, and will remain open until December 31, 2018, or until the adjusted General category quota is reached, whichever comes first.

#### Monitoring and Reporting

NMFS will continue to monitor the BFT fishery closely. Dealers are required to submit landing reports within 24 hours of a dealer receiving BFT. Late reporting by dealers compromises NMFS' ability to timely implement actions such as quota and retention limit adjustment, as well as closures, and may result in enforcement actions. Additionally, and separate from the dealer reporting requirement, General and HMS Charter/Headboat category vessel owners are required to report the catch of all BFT retained or discarded dead within 24 hours of the landing(s) or end of each trip, by accessing *hmspermits.noaa.gov* or by using the HMS Catch Reporting app, or calling (888) 872-8862 (Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.).

Depending on the level of fishing effort and catch rates of BFT, NMFS may determine that additional action (e.g., quota adjustment or closure) is necessary to ensure available subquotas are not exceeded or to enhance scientific data collection from, and fishing opportunities in, all geographic areas. If needed, subsequent adjustments will be published in the **Federal Register**. In addition, fishermen may call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (978) 281-9260, or access *hmspermits.noaa.gov*, for updates on quota monitoring and inseason adjustments.

NMFS reminds General category participants that when the fishery reopens December 1, 2018, the BFT General category daily retention limit

will be one large medium or giant BFT (measuring 73" or greater) per vessel per day/trip.

#### Classification

The Assistant Administrator for NMFS (AA) finds that it is impracticable and contrary to the public interest to provide prior notice of, and an opportunity for public comment on, this action for the following reasons:

The regulations implementing the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments provide for inseason retention limit adjustments to respond to the unpredictable nature of BFT availability on the fishing grounds, the migratory nature of this species, and the regional variations in the BFT fishery. Affording prior notice and opportunity for public comment to implement the quota transfer for the remainder of 2018 is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as such a delay would result in continued closure of the General category fishery (because the available quota has been exceeded) and the need to re-open the fishery later in the December time period, rather than the fishery automatically re-opening on December 1. The delay would preclude the fishery from harvesting BFT that are available on the fishing grounds and that might otherwise become unavailable during a delay. Therefore, the AA finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment. For these reasons, there also is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

This action is being taken under § 635.27(a)(9) (Inseason adjustments) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: November 29, 2018.

**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. 170816769-8162-02]

RIN 0648-XG470

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels Less Than 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 less than 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 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to catcher vessels less than 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.), December 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 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to catcher vessels less than 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 880 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 2018 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to catcher vessels less than 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 870 mt and is setting aside the remaining 10 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 less than 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 less than 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 November 28, 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: November 29, 2018.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**  
*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,*  
*National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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