

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: December 21, 2018.

**Karen H. Abrams,**

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

[FR Doc. 2018–28336 Filed 12–21–18; 4:15 pm]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 180202111–8353–02]

RIN 0648–XG690

#### Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery; Closure of the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area to General Category Individual Fishing Quota Scallop Vessels

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area is closed to Limited Access General Category Individual Fishing Quota scallop vessels for the remainder of the 2018 fishing year. No vessel issued a Limited Access General Category Individual Fishing Quota permit may fish for, possess, or land scallops from the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area. Regulations require this action once it is projected that 100 percent of trips allocated to the Limited Access General Category Individual Fishing Quota scallop vessels for the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area will be taken.

**DATES:** Effective 0001 hr local time, December 24, 2018, through March 31, 2019.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Shannah Jaburek, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 282–8456.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Regulations governing fishing activity in the Sea Scallop Access Areas can be found in 50 CFR 648.59 and 648.60. These regulations authorize vessels issued a valid Limited Access General Category (LAGC) Individual Fishing

Quota (IFQ) scallop permit to fish in the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area under specific conditions, including a total of 1,142 trips that may be taken during the 2018 fishing year. Section 648.59(g)(3)(iii) requires the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area to be closed to LAGC IFQ permitted vessels for the remainder of the fishing year once the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator determines that the allocated number of trips for fishing year 2018 are projected to be taken.

Based on trip declarations by LAGC IFQ scallop vessels fishing in the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area, analysis of fishing effort, and other information, NMFS projects that 1,142 trips will be taken as of December 24, 2018. Therefore, in accordance with § 648.59(g)(3)(iii), NMFS is closing the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area to all LAGC IFQ scallop vessels as of December 24, 2018. No vessel issued an LAGC IFQ permit may fish for, possess, or land scallops in or from the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area after 0001 local time, December 24, 2018. Any LAGC IFQ vessel that has declared into the Mid-Atlantic Access Area scallop fishery, complied with all trip notification and observer requirements, and crossed the VMS demarcation line on the way to the area before 0001, December 24, 2018, may complete its trip without being subject to this closure. This closure is in effect for the remainder of the 2018 scallop fishing year, through March 31, 2019.

#### Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866. NMFS finds good cause under to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment because it would be contrary to the public interest and impracticable. The Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area opened for the 2018 fishing year on April 19, 2018. The regulations at § 648.59(g)(3)(iii) require this closure to ensure that LAGC IFQ scallop vessels do not take more than their allocated number of trips in the area. The projected date on which the LAGC IFQ fleet will have taken all of its allocated trips in an Access Area becomes apparent only as trips into the area occur on a real-time basis and as activity trends begin to appear. As a result, NMFS can only make an accurate projection very close in time to when the fleet has taken all of its trips. To allow LAGC IFQ scallop vessels to continue to take trips in the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area during the period necessary to publish and receive

comments on a proposed rule would likely result in the vessels taking much more than the allowed number of trips in the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area. Excessive trips and harvest from the Mid-Atlantic Scallop Access Area would result in excessive fishing effort in the area, where effort controls are critical, thereby undermining conservation objectives of the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan and requiring more restrictive future management measures. Also, the public had prior notice and full opportunity to comment on this closure process when it was enacted. For these same reasons, NMFS further finds, under to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), good cause to waive the 30-day delayed effectiveness period.

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

Dated: December 21, 2018.

**Karen H. Abrams,**

*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 648

[Docket No. 170828822–70999–02]

RIN 0648–XG692

#### Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; 2018 Commercial Quota Harvested for the State of Rhode Island

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the 2018 summer flounder commercial quota allocated to the state of Rhode Island has been harvested. Vessels issued a commercial Federal permit for the summer flounder fishery may not land summer flounder in Rhode Island for the remainder of calendar year 2018, unless additional quota becomes available through a transfer from another state. Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery require publication of this notice to advise Rhode Island that the quota has been harvested, and to advise vessel and dealer permit holders that no Federal commercial quota is available to land summer flounder in Rhode Island.

**DATES:** Effective 0001 hours, December 29, 2018, through December 31, 2018.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Cynthia Ferrio, (978) 281-9180, or [Cynthia.Ferrio@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Ferrio@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery are found at 50 CFR part 648, subpart G. The regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned on a percentage basis 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.

The overall 2018 summer flounder commercial quota is 6,436,120 lb (2,919,375 kg) (83 FR 4165, January 30, 2018). The percent allocated to vessels landing summer flounder in Rhode Island is 15.68 percent, resulting in an initial state commercial quota of 1,009,375 lb (457,845 kg). Rhode Island's initial 2018 commercial quota was reduced to 996,373 lb (451,947 kg) due to a 2017 quota overage of 13,002 lb (5,898 kg). Rhode Island has received one quota transfer of 5,008 lb (2,272 kg) from North Carolina on February 6, 2018 (83 FR 5735), bringing its 2018 commercial quota to 1,001,381 lb (454,219 kg).

The NMFS Administrator for the Greater Atlantic Region (Regional Administrator), monitors the state commercial landings and determines when a state's commercial quota has been harvested. NMFS is required to publish notification in the **Federal Register** advising and notifying Federally permitted commercial vessels and dealers that, effective upon a specific date, the state's commercial quota has been harvested and no commercial quota is available for landing summer flounder in that state. The Regional Administrator has determined, based upon dealer reports and other available information, that the 2018 Rhode Island commercial summer flounder quota will be harvested by December 29, 2018.

Section 648.4(b) provides that Federal permit holders agree, as a condition of the permit, not to land summer flounder in any state that the Regional Administrator has determined no longer has commercial quota available. Therefore, effective 0001 hours, December 29, 2018, landings of summer flounder are prohibited in Rhode Island by vessels holding Federal summer flounder commercial fisheries permits for the remainder of the 2018 calendar year, unless additional quota becomes available through a transfer and is announced in the **Federal Register**. Effective 0001 hours, December 29,

2018, federally permitted dealers are also notified that they may not purchase summer flounder from federally permitted vessels that land in Rhode Island for the remainder of the calendar year.

**Classification**

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment because it would be contrary to the public interest. This action closes the commercial summer flounder fishery for Rhode Island until January 1, 2019. The regulations at § 648.103(b) require such action to ensure that summer flounder vessels do not exceed quotas allocated to the states. If implementation of this closure was delayed to solicit prior public comment, the quota for this fishing year would be exceeded, thereby undermining the conservation objectives of the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The Assistant Administrator further finds, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), good cause to waive the 30-day delayed effectiveness period for the reason stated above.

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

Dated: December 21, 2018.

**Karen H. Abrams,**

*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-XG675**

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pacific Cod 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; reallocation.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is reallocating the projected unused amounts of Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) from vessels using jig gear, catcher/processors using

hook-and-line gear, and catcher vessels using trawl gear to catcher vessels less than 50 feet length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line gear, catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line gear, vessels using pot gear, and catcher/processors using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to allow the 2018 TAC of Pacific cod in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA to be harvested.

**DATES:** Effective December 21, 2018 through 2400 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 31, 2018.

**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 2018 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to vessels using jig gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 61 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (83 FR 8768, March 1, 2018). The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that vessels using jig gear will not be able to harvest 60 mt of the 2018 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(12)(i)(B).

The 2018 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to catcher/processors using hook-and-line gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 308 mt, as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (83 FR 8768, March 1, 2018). The Regional Administrator has determined that catcher/processors using hook-and-line gear will not be able to harvest 40 mt of the 2018 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(12)(i)(B)(3).

The 2018 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 2,275 mt, as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (83 FR 8768, March 1, 2018). The Regional Administrator has determined that catcher vessels using trawl gear will not be able to harvest 580