

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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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.

[FR Doc. 2018-28215 Filed 12-21-18; 4:15 pm]

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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

mt of the 2018 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(12)(i)(B)(4).

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(12)(ii)(B), the Regional Administrator has also determined that catcher vessels less than 50 feet 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 currently have the capacity to harvest this excess allocation. Therefore, NMFS apportions 60 mt of Pacific cod from the jig vessel apportionment, 40 mt of Pacific cod from the hook-and-line catcher/processor apportionment, and 580 mt of Pacific cod from the trawl catcher vessel apportionment to catcher vessels less than 50 feet 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 GOA.

The harvest specifications for Pacific cod in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA included in the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (83 FR 8768, March 1, 2018) are revised as follows: 268 mt to catcher/processors using hook-and-line gear, 990 mt to catcher vessels less than 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line gear, 416 mt to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet LOA using hook-and-line gear, 1 mt to vessels using jig gear, 1,787 mt to vessels using pot gear, 700 mt to catcher/processors using trawl gear, and 1,695 mt to catcher vessels using trawl 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 Central 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 December 20, 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: 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. 170817779–8161–02]

RIN 0648–XG684

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Inseason Adjustment to the 2019 Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Pollock, Atka Mackerel, and Pacific Cod Total Allowable Catch Amounts

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; inseason adjustment; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS is adjusting the 2019 total allowable catch (TAC) amounts for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) pollock, Atka mackerel, and Pacific cod fisheries. This action is necessary because NMFS has determined these TACs are incorrectly specified, and will ensure the BSAI pollock, Atka mackerel, and Pacific cod TACs are the appropriate amounts based on the best available scientific information. Also, NMFS is announcing the Aleutian Islands Catcher Vessel (CV) Harvest Set-Aside and Bering Sea Trawl CV A-Season Sector Limitation will be in effect for 2019, and TACs in this inseason adjustment will apply for 2019. This action is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Fishery

Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 21, 2018, until the effective date of the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for BSAI groundfish, unless otherwise modified or superseded through publication of a notification in the **Federal Register**.

Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., January 14, 2019.

ADDRESSES: Submit your comments, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2018–0801, by either of the following methods:

- **Federal e-Rulemaking Portal:** Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2018-0801, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

- **Mail:** Submit written comments to Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802–1668.

Instructions: NMFS may not consider comments if they are sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the comment period ends. 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), 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: Mary Furunes, 907–586–7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (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 final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (83 FR 8365, February 27, 2018) set the 2019 Aleutian Islands (AI) pollock TAC at 19,000 metric tons (mt), the 2019 Bering Sea (BS) pollock TAC at 1,383,000 mt, the 2019 BSAI Atka