

Table 2. Comparison in LB (MT) of the Alternatives of Quota Combinations Reviewed

	2006 Initial TAL	2006 Post- Transfer Commercial Quota	2006 Post- Transfer Recreational Harvest Limit	2006 Research Set-Aside	2006 Adjusted Commercial Quota	2006 Adjusted Recreational Harvest Limit
2006 Final Quota Alternative						
Final Rule Preferred Alternative	24,798,836 (11,249)	8,081,096 (3,666)	16,717,740 (7,583)	363,677 (165)	7,962,586 (3,612)	16,472,573 (7,472)
Council's Preferred Quota Alternative						
Proposed Rule Preferred Alternative	24,798,836 (11,249)	9,582,999 (4,347)	15,215,836 (6,902)	363,677 (165)	9,442,465 (4,283)	14,992,694 (6,801)
2005 Final Quota Alternative						
Preferred Alternative	30,853,578 (13,995)	10,500,000 (4,763)	20,353,578 (9,232)	297,750 (135)	10,398,671 (4,717)	20,157,157 (9,143)

The impacts on revenues of the proposed RSA were analyzed. The social and economic impacts of this proposed RSA are expected to be minimal. Assuming the full RSA is allocated for bluefish, the set-aside amount could be worth as much as \$101,830 dockside, based on an average 2004 ex-vessel price of \$0.28 per pound for bluefish. Assuming an equal reduction among all 748 active dealer reported vessels, this could mean a reduction of about \$136 per individual vessel. Changes in the recreational harvest limit would be insignificant (less than a 2 percent decrease), if 1.5 percent of the TAL is used for research.

It is unlikely that there would be negative economic impacts as a result of the RSA quota. The RSAs are expected to yield important long-term benefits associated with improved data upon which to base management decisions. A full analysis is available from the Council (see **ADDRESSES**).

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

Dated: February 16, 2006.

William T. Hogarth,

*Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 040804229-4300-02; I.D. 021706B]

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; Modification of the Yellowtail Flounder Landing Limit for the U.S./Canada Management Area

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; landing limit.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Administrator, Northeast (NE) Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), is modifying the Georges Bank (GB) yellowtail flounder trip limit from 1,500 lb (680.4 kg) per day up to a maximum of 15,000 lb (6,804.1 kg) per trip, to 15,000 lb (6,804.1 kg) per trip with no daily limit, for NE multispecies days-at-sea (DAS) vessels fishing in the U.S./Canada Management Area. This action is authorized by the regulations

implementing Amendment 13 to the NE Multispecies Fishery Management Plan and is intended to prevent under-harvesting the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for GB yellowtail flounder while ensuring that the TAC will not be exceeded during the 2005 fishing year. This action is being taken to provide additional opportunities for vessels to fully harvest the GB yellowtail flounder TAC under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

DATES: Effective February 21, 2006, through April 30, 2006.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark Grant, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9145, fax (978) 281-9135.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing the GB yellowtail flounder landing limit within the U.S./Canada Management Area are found at 50 CFR 648.85(a)(3)(iv)(C) and (D). The regulations authorize vessels issued a valid limited access NE multispecies permit and fishing under a NE multispecies DAS to fish in the U.S./Canada Management Area, as defined at § 648.85(a)(1), under specific conditions. The TAC for GB yellowtail flounder for the 2005 fishing year (May 1, 2005—April 30, 2006) is 4,260 mt. On

February 9, 2006 (71 FR 6984), NMFS implemented a GB yellowtail trip limit of 1,500 lb (680.4 kg) per day, up to a maximum of 15,000 lb (6,804.1 kg) per trip, as required by the regulations at § 648.85(a)(3)(iv)(C)(2). That action was non-discretionary and was based on the Regional Administrator's projection that 70 percent (2,982 mt) of the GB yellowtail flounder TAC of 4,260 mt would be harvested by February 9, 2006.

The regulations at § 648.85(a)(3)(iv)(D) authorize the Regional Administrator to increase or decrease the trip limits in the U.S./Canada Management Area to prevent over-harvesting or under-harvesting the TAC allocation. Based upon Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) reports and other available information, the Regional Administrator has determined that the current rate of harvest will result in the under-harvest of the GB yellowtail flounder TAC during the 2005 fishing year. Based on this information, the Regional Administrator is removing the 1,500-lb (680.4-kg) per day limit and retaining the 15,000-lb (6,804.1-kg) trip limit, for NE multispecies DAS vessels fishing in the U.S./Canada Management Area, effective February 21, 2006, through April 30, 2006. Vessels landing on or after February 21, 2006 may possess and land up to 15,000 lb (6,804.1 kg) of GB yellowtail flounder, regardless of the length of their trip.

Classification

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

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), the Assistant Administrator (AA) finds good cause to waive prior notice and opportunity for public comment for this action, because notice and comment would be impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The regulations at § 648.85(a)(3)(iv)(D) grant the Regional Administrator the authority to adjust the GB yellowtail flounder trip limits to prevent over-harvesting or under-harvesting the TAC allocation. Given that approximately 30 percent of the GB yellowtail flounder TAC remains unharvested and the 2005 fishing year ends on April 30, 2006, the time necessary to provide for prior notice, opportunity for public comment, or delayed effectiveness would prevent the agency from ensuring that the 2005 TAC for GB yellowtail flounder will be fully harvested. It was not possible to take this action earlier because the trigger for implementing the non-discretionary 1,500-lb (680.4-kg) daily limit (projected date that 70 percent of the TAC would be harvested) did not occur until February 9, 2006. If implementation of

this action is delayed, the NE multispecies fishery could be prevented from fully harvesting the TAC for GB yellowtail flounder during the 2005 fishing year. Under-harvesting the GB yellowtail TAC would result in increased economic impacts to the industry and social impacts beyond those analyzed for Amendment 13, as the full potential revenue from the available GB yellowtail TAC in the U.S./Canada Management Area would not be realized.

The AA finds good cause, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), to waive the entire 30-day delayed effectiveness period for this action. For the reasons specified above, a delay in the effectiveness of the trip limit modification in this rule would prevent the agency from meeting its management obligation and ensuring the opportunity for the 2005 catch TAC for GB yellowtail flounder specified for the Western and Eastern U.S./Canada Areas to be fully harvested. Any such delay could lead to the negative impacts to the fishing industry described above.

The rate of harvest of the GB yellowtail flounder TAC in the Western and Eastern U.S./Canada Areas is updated weekly on the Internet at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov>. Accordingly, the public is able to obtain information that would provide at least some advanced notice of a potential action to provide additional opportunities to the NE multispecies industry to fully harvest the TAC for GB yellowtail flounder during the 2005 fishing year. Further, the potential for this action was considered and open to public comment during the development of Amendment 13. Therefore, any negative effect the waiving of public comment and delayed effectiveness may have on the public is mitigated by these factors.

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

Dated: February 21, 2006.

James P. Burgess,

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. 041126333-5040-02; I.D. 021606E]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Vessels Catching Pacific Cod for Processing by the Offshore Component in the Western 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 vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2006 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 19, 2006, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1, 2006.

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 A season allocation of the 2006 TAC of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 828 metric tons (mt) as established by the 2005 and 2006 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (70 FR 8958, February 24, 2005).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2006 TAC of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component of the Western