

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961107312-7021-02; I.D. 040797A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the Western Aleutian District of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is closing directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Western Aleutian District of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 1997 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific ocean perch in this area.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), April 7, 1997, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The TAC of Pacific ocean perch for the Western Aleutian District was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the BSAI (62 FR 7168, February 18, 1997) as 6,390 metric tons (mt). See § 679.20(c)(3)(iii).

In accordance with § 679.20 (d)(1), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the TAC for Pacific

ocean perch specified for the Western Aleutian District will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 4,790 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 1,600 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Western Aleutian District.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts for applicable gear types may be found in the regulations at §§ 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: April 7, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97-9324 Filed 4-7-97; 4:58 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F