

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 648

Fisheries, Fishing, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: February 19, 1997.

Rolland A. Schmitt

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 648 is amended to read as follows:

PART 648—FISHERIES OF THE NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

1. The authority citation for part 648 continues to read as follows:

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

2. In § 648.80, paragraph (a)(2)(iii) is revised and paragraph (a)(10) is added to read as follows:

§ 648.80 Regulated mesh areas and restrictions on gear and methods of fishing

* * * * *

(a) * * *

(2) * * *

(iii) *Other gear and mesh exemptions.*

The minimum mesh size for any trawl net, sink gillnet, Scottish seine, midwater trawl, or purse seine on a vessel or used by a vessel when fishing in the GOM/GB Regulated Mesh Area while not under the NE multispecies DAS program, but when under one of the exemptions specified in paragraphs (a)(3), (a)(4), (a)(6), (a)(8), (a)(9), (d), (e), (h), and (i) of this section, is set forth in the respective paragraph specifying the exemption. Vessels that are not fishing under one of these exemptions, or under the small dredge exemption specified in § 648.54 and (a)(10) of this section, under the scallop state waters exemption specified in § 648.54, or under a NE multispecies DAS, are prohibited from fishing in the GOM/GB regulated mesh area.

* * * * *

(10) *Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption within the Gulf of Maine (GOM) Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area.* Vessels with a limited access scallop permit that have declared out of the DAS program as specified in § 648.10, or have used up their DAS allocations, and vessels issued a general scallop permit may fish in the GOM Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area when not under a NE multispecies DAS providing the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (a)(10)(i) of this section. The GOM Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption Area is equivalent to the area defined in paragraph (a)(3) of this section and designated as the Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area.

(i) *Requirements.* (A) A vessel fishing in the GOM Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption Area specified in paragraph (a)(10) of this section, may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than Atlantic sea scallops.

(B) The combined dredge width in use by or in possession on board vessels fishing in the GOM Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption Area shall not exceed 10.5 ft (3.2 m) measured at the widest point in the bail of the dredge.

(C) The exemption does not apply to areas closed to meet the Mid-coast closure fishery mortality reduction targets as specified in § 648.81(g).

(ii) [Reserved]

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50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 960502124-6190-02; I.D. 021997E]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Scallop Fishery; Registration Area D

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is closing the scallop fishery in all districts of Scallop Registration Area D (Yakutat) other than District 16. This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the scallop 1997 total allowable catch (TAC) in this area.

EFFECTIVE DATES: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 20, 1997, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., June 30, 1997.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The scallop fishery in the exclusive economic zone off Alaska is managed by NMFS according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Scallop Fishery Off Alaska (FMP), which was prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Fishing for scallops is governed by regulations appearing at subpart F of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.62(b), the 1997 scallop TAC for all districts of Scallop Registration Area D, other than District 16, was established by the Final 1996 Harvest Specifications of Scallops (61 FR 38099, July 23, 1996) as 250,000 lb (113,430 kg) shucked meat.

In accordance with § 679.62(c), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS,

has determined that the scallop TAC for all districts of Scallop Registration Area D, other than District 16, has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting the taking and retention of scallops in all districts of Scallop Registration Area D, other than District 16.

Classification

This action is required by § 679.62 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: February 19, 1997.

Gary Matlock,

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

[FR Doc. 97-4586 Filed 2-20-97; 2:28 pm]

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50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961107312-7021-02; I.D. 021997A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Offshore Component Pollock in the Bering Sea Subarea

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the Bering Sea subarea (BS) of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the first seasonal allowance of the pollock total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to vessels harvesting pollock for processing by the offshore component in the BS.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 20 1997, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 15, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Ham, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone is managed by the 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 CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(iii), the first seasonal allowance of pollock for vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the BS was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish. The Final 1997 Specifications were published in the Federal Register on February 18, 1997 (62 FR 7168).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the first allowance of pollock TAC for vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the BS soon will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 278,736 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 27,000 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 will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the BS. This closure is effective from February 20, 1997, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 15, 1997. Under § 679.20(a)(5)(i), the second seasonal allowance of pollock TAC will become available for directed fishing at 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1. 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: February 19, 1997.
Gary Matlock
*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*
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50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961107312-7021-02; I.D. 021997C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Species in the Rock Sole/Flathead Sole/"Other Flatfish" Fishery Category by Vessels Using Trawl Gear in 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 species in the rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category by vessels using trawl gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the first seasonal apportionment of the 1997 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance of halibut specified for the trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 20, 1997, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew Smoker, 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 first seasonal apportionment of the prohibited species bycatch mortality allowance of halibut for the BSAI trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category, which is defined at § 679.21(e)(3)(iv)(B)(2), was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish (62 FR 7168, February 18, 1997) as 485 mt.

In accordance with § 679.21(e)(7)(iv), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the first seasonal apportionment of the 1997 halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery in the BSAI has been caught. Consequently, NMFS is closing directed fishing for species in the rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category by vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e).

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR 679.21 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: February 19, 1997.

Gary Matlock
*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*
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