

Species	Area	TAC (mt)
Shortraker/rougheye rockfish	Entire GOA	1,590
Pollock	Inshore component, Statistical Area 610	7,450
	Inshore component, Statistical Area 620	12,510
	Inshore component, Statistical Area 630	9,830
Pollock	Eastern Regulatory Area	5,580
Pollock	Offshore component, entire GOA	0
Pacific cod	Offshore component, Statistical Area 610	1,745
	Offshore component, Statistical Areas 620, 630	3,239
	Offshore component, Statistical Areas 640, 650	94
Pacific cod	Inshore component, Western Regulatory Area	15,703
Pacific cod	Inshore component, Central Regulatory Area	29,153
Deep-water flatfish	Western Regulatory Area	340
Northern rockfish	Eastern Regulatory Area	10

Consequently, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator establishes these TAC amounts as directed fishing allowances.

Further, the Regional Administrator finds that these directed fishing allowances will be reached before the end of the year. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for these species in the specified areas.

Under authority of the interim 1998 specifications (62 FR 65622, December 15, 1998), pollock fishing opened on January 1, 1998, for amounts specified in that publication. NMFS has since closed Statistical Area 610 to directed fishing for pollock effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 26, 1998 (63 FR 4600, January 30, 1998); Statistical Area 620 to directed fishing for pollock effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 7, 1998 (63 FR 6881, February 11, 1998), Statistical Area 630 to directed fishing for pollock effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 2, 1998 (63 FR 6111, February 6, 1998), and Statistical Areas 640 and 650 to directed fishing for pollock effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 9, 1998 (to be published March 13, 1998). The closures for Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630 will remain in effect until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., June 1, 1998. The closure for Statistical Areas 640 and 650 will remain in effect until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998.

Under authority of the interim 1998 specifications (62 FR 65622, December 15, 1998), Pacific cod fishing opened on January 1, 1998, for amounts specified in that notice. NMFS has since closed Statistical Area 610 to directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 3, 1998 (63 FR 11160, March 6, 1998) and Statistical Areas 620 and 630 to directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area effective 1200 hrs,

A.l.t., March 10, 1998 (published on March 13, 1998).

The closures in this document supersede the closures announced in, or under authority of, the 1998 interim specifications (62 FR 62622, December 15, 1997). While the closures in this document are in effect, the maximum retainable bycatch amounts at § 679.20 (e) and (f) apply at any time during a fishing trip. The closures to directed fishing in this document are in addition to closures and prohibitions found in regulations at 50 CFR part 679. Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas. The definitions of GOA deep-water flatfish and "other rockfish" species categories are provided in the **Federal Register** publication of the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications.

NMFS may implement other closures during the 1998 fishing year, as necessary for effective conservation and management.

Classification

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

This action responds to the TAC limitations and other restrictions on the fisheries established in the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish for the GOA. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1998 TACs for several groundfish species in the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The fleet is currently harvesting groundfish, and further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

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

Dated: March 11, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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. 971208298-8055-02; I.D. 031198A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Closures of Specified Groundfish Fisheries in 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 specified groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the prohibited species bycatch allowances and directed fishing allowances specified for the 1998 BSAI groundfish fisheries.

DATES: Effective March 11, 1998, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t. December 31, 1998.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the BSAI 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.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), if the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) determines that the amount of a target species or "other species" category apportioned to a fishery or, with respect to pollock, to an inshore or offshore component allocation, will be reached, the Regional Administrator may establish a directed fishing allowance for that species or species group. If the Regional Administrator establishes a directed fishing allowance, and that allowance is or will be reached before the end of the fishing year, NMFS will prohibit directed fishing for that species or species group in the specified subarea or district (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iii)). Similarly, under § 679.21(e), if the Regional Administrator determines that a fishery category's bycatch allowance of halibut, red king crab, or *C. bairdi* Tanner crab for a specified area has been reached, the Regional Administrator will prohibit directed fishing for each species in that category in the specified area.

The Regional Administrator has determined that the remaining amounts of pollock in the Bogoslof District; Pacific ocean perch, "other rockfish", and "other red rockfish" in the Bering Sea subarea (BS); and sharpchin/northern rockfish, shortraker/rougheye rockfish, and "other rockfish" in the Aleutian Islands subarea (AI) will be necessary as incidental catch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries for the 1998 fishing year. Consequently, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator establishes these remaining amounts as directed fishing allowances.

Further, the Regional Administrator finds that these directed fishing allowances will be reached before the end of the year. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for these species in the specified areas and

these closures will remain in effect through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998.

In addition, the BSAI halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl rockfish fishery and the trawl Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/sablefish fishery categories, defined at § 679.21(e)(3)(iv)(C) and (D), is 0 mt. In accordance with § 679.21(e)(7)(iv), therefore, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for rockfish by vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI and for Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/sablefish by vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI. These closures will remain in effect through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998.

Under authority of the Interim 1998 Specifications (62 FR 65626, December 15, 1998), NMFS closed directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the Eastern Aleutian District and the BS of the BSAI effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 2, 1998 through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998 (63 FR 6110, February 6, 1998), pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the BS of the BSAI effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 20, 1998, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 15, 1998 (63 FR 9745, February 26, 1998), pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component in the BS of the BSAI effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 26, 1998, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 15, 1998 (63 FR 10569, March 4, 1998), pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the AI of the BSAI effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 26, 1998, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998 (63 FR 9974, February 27, 1998), and rock sole, flathead sole, and "other flatfish" by vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 5, 1998, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 30, 1998 (63 FR 11629, March 10, 1998). The amount of TAC remaining under the Final Specification of groundfish following closure under the interim

specifications will be taken as incidental catch in directed fishing for other species.

These closures supersede the closures announced in the 1998 interim specifications (62 FR 65626, December 15, 1997). While these closures are in effect, the maximum retainable bycatch amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a fishing trip. These closures to directed fishing are in addition to closures and prohibitions found in regulations at 50 CFR part 679. Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas. In the BSAI, "Other rockfish" includes *Sebastes* and *Sebastolobus* species except for Pacific ocean perch and the "other red rockfish" species. "Other red rockfish" includes shortraker, rougheye, sharpchin, and northern rockfish.

Classification

This action is required by § 679.20 and § 679.21 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

This action responds to the TAC limitations and other restrictions on the fisheries established in the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish for the BSAI. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1998 TAC of several groundfish species in the BSAI. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The fleet is currently harvesting groundfish, and further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not be delayed for 30 days.

Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

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

Dated: March 11, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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