

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

## 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 971208297-8054-02; I.D. 071398E]

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska**

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

**ACTION:** Closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 1998 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific ocean perch in this area.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 14, 1998, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mary Furuness, 907-486-6919.

**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.

In accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(ii), the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (63 FR 12027, March 12, 1998) established the amount of the 1998 TAC of Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska as 6,600 metric tons (mt). The directed fishery for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area was closed under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on July 6, 1998, (63 FR 37071, July 9, 1998) and reopened on July 12, 1998, (to be published on July 16, 1998).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 1998 TAC for Pacific ocean perch will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 5,600 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 1,000 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 has been reached.

Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

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

**Classification**

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1998 TAC of Pacific ocean perch for the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. 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.

This action is required by 50 CFR 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: July 14, 1998.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**  
*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
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