

fisheries. The TRT recommended that workshops be conducted to educate vessel owner/operators and crew members about strategies for reducing incidental harvest of marine mammals, guidelines for releasing entangled animals, and the MMPA and its implementing regulations. Another purpose of these workshops is to provide a forum for information exchange regarding successful strategies for reducing incidental takes of marine mammals. Although participation is not mandatory under the MMPA, it is likely that attendance at these workshops will be a requirement of NMFS' proposed Atlantic Offshore Cetacean Take Reduction Plan.

3. Section 7 of the ESA requires all Federal agencies to ensure that any action, funded, authorized, or carried out, is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species. If such action adversely affects a listed marine species under NMFS jurisdiction, a consultation must be conducted, and NMFS must provide a written biological opinion on the effects. A consultation was conducted on the Atlantic Pelagic Fishery, and NMFS concluded in the biological opinion (May 29, 1997; amended July 10, 1998) that the longline component of the Atlantic Pelagic Fishery was likely to adversely affect, but not jeopardize, the continued existence of listed sea turtles. The opinion requires NMFS to develop a schedule of workshops throughout the geographical range of the fishery to educate vessel operators on appropriate sea turtle resuscitation, and handling and release techniques. All vessel operators must attend a workshop before commencing fishing operation in September 2000. Thus, for purposes of the ESA, participation in at least one workshop is mandatory.

Workshops

This announcement is for the workshop scheduled for New Bedford, MA, on October 9, 1998, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The workshop will be held at the Days Inn, 500 Hathaway Road, New Bedford, MA 02740; (508)997-1231.

Because specific locations and times are unknown for the later workshops, they will be published separately in the *Federal Register*. However, locations by area have been set for 1998 for the following workshops: Montauk, NY; Barnegat Light, NJ; Wanchese, NC; and Charleston, SC. Additional workshop meeting locations and dates for 1999 will be announced separately in the *Federal Register*.

Special Accommodations

These hearings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Rebecca Lent (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

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

Dated: September 28, 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. 971208297-8054-02; I.D. 092298B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Modification of a closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to fully utilize the total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 5, 1998, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew N. Smoker, 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 1998 TAC of Pacific cod allocated to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area was established as 16,682 metric tons (mt) by the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications

of Groundfish for the GOA (63 FR 12027, March 12, 1998). See § 679.20(c)(3). On April 16, 1998 (63 FR 18848), it was increased by an apportionment of reserves to 20,853 mt.

The fishery for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA was closed to directed fishing under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on March 3, 1998 (63 FR 11160, March 6, 1998), in order to reserve amounts anticipated to be needed for incidental catch in other fisheries.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 20,753 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 100 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. NMFS has determined that as of September 5, 1998, 1,238 mt remain in the directed fishing allowance. Therefore, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 5, 1998.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds for good cause that providing prior notice and public comment or delaying the effective date of this action is impracticable and contrary to the public interest.

All other closures remain in full force and effect. This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately in order to allow full utilization of the Pacific cod TAC. Further delay would only disrupt the FMP's objective of providing a portion of the Pacific cod TAC for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. Without this action, the Pacific cod allocation for vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA would be underharvested. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

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: September 25, 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. 971208297-8054-02; I.D. 092298A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Modification of a closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to fully utilize the total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 5, 1998, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew N. Smoker, 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 1998 TAC of Pacific cod allocated to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area was established as 30,037 metric tons (mt) by the Final 1998 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (63 FR 12027, March 12, 1998). See § 679.20(c)(3). On April 16, 1998 (63 FR 18848), it was increased by an apportionment of reserves to 37,548 mt.

The fishery for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA was closed to directed fishing under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on March 10, 1998 (63 FR 12416 March 13, 1998) in order to reserve amounts anticipated to be needed for incidental catch in other fisheries.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 36,548 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 100 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries.

NMFS has determined that as of September 5, 1998, 1,677 mt remain in the directed fishing allowance. Therefore, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in

the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 5, 1998.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds for good cause that providing prior notice and public comment or delaying the effective date of this action is impracticable and contrary to the public interest.

All other closures remain in full force and effect. This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately in order to allow full utilization of the Pacific cod TAC. Further delay would only disrupt the FMP's objective of providing a portion of the Pacific cod TAC for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. Without this action, the Pacific cod allocation for vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA would be underharvested. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

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: September 25, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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