

the north by 27°53' N. lat., on the south by 27°30' N. lat., on the east by 79°56' W. long., and on the west by 80°00' W. long. No person may fish for South Atlantic snapper-grouper in the experimental closed area, and no person may retain South Atlantic snapper-grouper in or from the area. In the experimental closed area, any South Atlantic snapper-grouper taken incidentally by hook-and-line gear must be released immediately by cutting the line without removing the fish from the water.

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3. In § 622.48, the introductory text and paragraphs (c), (f), (g), and (h) are revised; and paragraphs (k) and (l) are added to read as follows:

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§ 622.48 Adjustment of management measures.

In accordance with the framework procedures of the applicable FMPs, the RA may establish or modify the following items:

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(c) *Coastal migratory pelagic fish*. For a species or species group: Age-structured analyses, target date for rebuilding an overfished species, MSY (or proxy), stock biomass achieved by fishing at MSY (B_{MSY}) (or proxy), maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT), minimum stock size threshold (MSST), OY, TAC, quota (including a quota of zero), bag limit (including a bag limit of zero), size limits, vessel trip limits, closed seasons or areas and reopenings, gear restrictions (ranging from regulation to complete prohibition), reallocation of the commercial/recreational allocation of Atlantic group Spanish mackerel, permit requirements, definitions of essential fish habitat, and essential fish habitat HAPCs or Coral HAPCs.

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(f) *South Atlantic snapper-grouper and wreckfish*. For species or species groups: Biomass levels, age-structured analyses, target dates for rebuilding overfished species, MSY, ABC, TAC, quotas, trip limits, bag limits, minimum sizes, gear restrictions (ranging from regulation to complete prohibition), seasonal or area closures, definitions of essential fish habitat, and essential fish habitat HAPCs or Coral HAPCs.

(g) *South Atlantic golden crab*. Biomass levels, age-structured analyses, MSY, ABC, TAC, quotas (including quotas equal to zero), trip limits, minimum sizes, gear regulations and restrictions, permit requirements, seasonal or area closures, time frame for recovery of golden crab if overfished,

fishing year (adjustment not to exceed 2 months), observer requirements, authority for the RA to close the fishery when a quota is reached or is projected to be reached, definitions of essential fish habitat, and essential fish habitat HAPCs or Coral HAPCs.

(h) *South Atlantic shrimp*. Biomass levels, age-structured analyses, BRD certification criteria, BRD specifications, BRD testing protocol, certified BRDs, nets required to use BRDs, times and locations when the use of BRDs is required, definitions of essential fish habitat, and essential fish habitat HAPCs or Coral HAPCs.

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(k) *Atlantic coast red drum*. Definitions of essential fish habitat and essential fish habitat HAPCs or Coral HAPCs.

(l) *South Atlantic coral, coral reefs, and live/hard bottom habitats*. Definitions of essential fish habitat and essential fish habitat HAPCs or Coral HAPCs.

PART 640—SPINY LOBSTER FISHERY OF THE GULF OF MEXICO AND SOUTH ATLANTIC

4. The authority citation for part 640 continues to read as follows:

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

5. Section 640.25 is revised to read as follows:

§ 640.25 Adjustment of management measures.

In accordance with the framework procedure of the Fishery Management Plan for the Spiny Lobster Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, the RA may establish or modify the following items: definitions of essential fish habitat, Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, Coral-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, biomass levels, age-structured analyses, limits on the number of traps fished by each vessel, construction characteristics of traps, specification of gear and vessel identification requirements, specification of allowable or prohibited gear in a directed fishery, specification of bycatch levels in non-directed fisheries, changes to soak or removal periods and requirements for traps, recreational bag and possession limits, changes in fishing seasons, limitations on use, possession, and handling of undersized lobsters, and changes in minimum size.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 99122347-9347-01; I.D. 060500A]

Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Whiting Closure for the Mothership Sector

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

ACTION: Fishing restrictions; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces closure of the 2000 mothership fishery for Pacific whiting (whiting) at 4:00 p.m. local time (l.t.) June 9, 2000, because the allocation for the mothership sector is projected to be reached by that time. This action is intended to keep the harvest of whiting at the 2000 allocation levels.

DATES: Effective from 4:00 p.m. l.t. June 9, 2000, until the start of the 2001 primary season for the mothership sector, unless modified, superseded or rescinded; such action will be published in the **Federal Register**. Comments will be accepted through June 29, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments to William Stelle, Jr., Administrator, Northwest Region (Regional Administrator), NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115-0070; or Rodney R. McInnis, Acting Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Katherine King at 206-526-6145 or Becky Renko at 206-526-6110.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This action is authorized by regulations implementing the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which governs the groundfish fishery off Washington, Oregon, and California. On January 4, 2000 (65 FR 221), the levels of allowable biological catch (ABC), the optimum yield (OY) and the commercial OY (the OY minus the tribal allocation) for U.S. harvests of whiting were announced in the **Federal Register**. For 2000 the whiting ABC and OY are 232,000 mt (mt) and the commercial OY is 199,500 mt. Regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4) divide the commercial OY into separate allocations for the catcher/processor, mothership, and shore-based sectors of the whiting fishery. The 2000

allocations, which are based on the 2000 commercial OY, are 67,830 mt (34 percent) for the catcher/processor sector, 47,880 mt (24 percent) for the mothership sector, and 83,790 mt (42 percent) for the shoreside sector.

When each sector's allocation is reached, the primary season for that sector is ended. The catcher/processor sector is composed of vessels that harvest and process whiting. The mothership sector is composed of motherships, and catcher vessels that harvest whiting for delivery to motherships. Motherships are vessels that process, but do not harvest, whiting. The shoreside sector is composed of vessels that harvest whiting for delivery to shoreside processors. The regulations at 50 CFR 600.323 (a)(3)(i) describe the primary season for vessels delivering to motherships as the period(s) when at-sea processing is allowed and the fishery is open for the mothership sector.

NMFS Action

This action announces achievement of the allocation for the mothership sector only. The best available information on June 8, 2000, indicated that the 47,880-mt mothership allocation would be reached by 4:00 p.m., June 9, 2000, at which time the primary season for the mothership sector ends and further at-sea processing and receipt of whiting by a mothership, or taking and retaining, possessing, or landing of whiting by a catcher boat in the mothership sector, are prohibited. For the reasons stated here, and in accordance with the regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4)(iii)(B), NMFS herein announces that effective at 4:00 p.m., June 9, 2000—(1) further receiving or at-sea processing of whiting by a mothership is prohibited. No additional unprocessed whiting may be brought on board after at-sea processing is prohibited, but a mothership may continue to process whiting that was on board before at-sea processing was

prohibited, and (2) whiting may not be taken and retained, possessed, or landed by a catcher vessel participating in the mothership sector.

Classification

This action is authorized by the regulations implementing the FMP. The determination to take this action is based on the most recent data available. The aggregate data upon which the determination is based are available for public inspection at the office of the Regional Administrator (see **ADDRESSES**) during business hours. This action is taken under the authority of 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4)(iii)(B) and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: June 9, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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