

Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Because no response was received from Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Maryland, and Florida, state concurrence in consistency is inferred. New Jersey disagreed with this determination and advocated that the specification of Atlantic mackerel TALFF is inconsistent with the economic protection provisions of its coastal management program relative to employment and financial opportunities for commercial, charter, and party vessels. NMFS and the Council disagree with New Jersey's determination. Allowing a very small level (<1 percent of the ABC) of foreign fishing to take place, primarily to move incrementally toward achieving OY and to provide opportunity to utilize U.S. harvesting capacity by stimulating JV activity, will have a positive impact on the development of the U.S. Atlantic mackerel fishery and will not compete with mackerel harvested by U.S. vessels.

The President has directed Federal agencies to use plain language in their communications with the public including regulations. To comply with this directive, we seek public comment on any ambiguity or unnecessary complexity arising from the language used in this final rule. Such comments should be sent to the Northeast Regional Administrator (see **ADDRESSES**).

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 648

Fisheries, Fishing, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: February 26, 2001.

William T. Hogarth,

*Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 648 is amended 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 § 648.21, paragraph (e) is revised to read as follows:

§ 648.21 Procedures for determining initial annual amounts.

(e) *Distribution of annual Loligo squid commercial quota.* (1) Beginning January 1, 2001, a commercial quota will be allocated annually for *Loligo* squid into quarterly periods, based on the following percentages:

Quarter	Percent
I—January—March	33.23
II—April—June	17.61
III—July—September	17.30
IV—October—December	31.86

(2) Beginning January 1, 2001, any overages of commercial quota landed from Quarter I will be subtracted from Quarter III and any overages of commercial quota landed from Quarter II will be subtracted from Quarter IV.

3. In § 648.22, paragraph (a) is revised to read as follows:

§ 648.22 Closure of the fishery.

(a) *General.* NMFS shall close the directed mackerel fishery in the EEZ when U.S. fishermen have harvested 80 percent of the DAH of that fishery if such closure is necessary to prevent the DAH from being exceeded. The closure shall remain in effect for the remainder of the fishing year, with incidental catches allowed as specified in paragraph (c) of this section, until the entire DAH is attained. When the Regional Administrator projects that DAH will be attained for mackerel, NMFS will close the mackerel fishery in the EEZ, and the incidental catches specified for mackerel in paragraph (c) of this section will be prohibited. NMFS will close the directed fishery in the EEZ for *Loligo* when 80 percent is harvested in Quarters I, II and III, and when 95 percent of the total annual DAH has been harvested. The closure of the directed fishery will be in effect for the remainder of the fishing year, with incidental catches allowed as specified in paragraph (c) of this section. NMFS will close the directed fishery in the EEZ for *Illex* or butterfish when 95 percent of the DAH has been harvested. The closure of the directed fishery will be in effect for the remainder of the fishing year, with incidental catches allowed as specified in paragraph (c) of this section.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 010112013-1013-01; I.D. 022701B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Vessels Catching Pacific Cod for Processing by the Inshore Component in the Western 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 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 prevent exceeding the A season amount of the Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 27, 2001, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., June 10, 2001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew 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 2001 A season Pacific cod TAC apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 9,882 metric tons (mt) as established by the Final 2001 Harvest Specifications and Associated Management Measures for the Groundfish Fisheries Off Alaska (66 FR 7276, January 22, 2001).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the A season amount of the Pacific cod TAC apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for

processing by the inshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 9,632 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 250 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 Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western 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. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds that the need to immediately implement this action to prevent exceeding the amount of the 2001 A season Pacific cod TAC specified for the inshore component constitutes good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(3)(B) and 50 CFR 679.20(b)(3)(iii)(A), as such procedures would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Similarly the need to implement these measures in a timely

fashion to prevent exceeding the 2001 A season Pacific cod TAC specified for the inshore component constitutes good cause to find that the effective date 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.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: February 27, 2001

Bruce C. Morehead,

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