

Dated: March 31, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

[FR Doc. 00-8376 Filed 3-31-00; 3:40 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[ID. 032700A]

Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Renewal of Exempted Fishing Permit

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

ACTION: Renewal of Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) for monitoring incidental catch of salmon and groundfish in the Washington-Oregon-California (WOC) shore-based Pacific whiting fishery.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the receipt of an application, and NMFS' intent to renew EFPs for vessels participating in an observation program to monitor the incidental take of salmon and groundfish in the shore-based component of the Pacific whiting fishery. These EFPs are necessary to allow trawl vessels fishing for Pacific whiting to delay sorting their catch, and thus to retain prohibited species and groundfish in excess of cumulative trip limits until the point of offloading. These activities are otherwise prohibited by Federal regulations.

DATES: The EFPs will be effective no earlier than April 1, 2000, and would expire no later than May 31, 2001, but could be terminated earlier under terms and conditions of the EFPs and other applicable laws.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the EFP are available from Becky Renko or Katherine King Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0070.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Becky Renko or Katherine King 206-526-6140.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This action is authorized by Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act provisions at 50 CFR 600.745 which state that EFPs may be used to authorize fishing activities that would otherwise be prohibited.

NMFS received an application requesting renewal of these EFPs from

the States of Washington, Oregon, and California at the March 6-10, 2000, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting in Sacramento California. An opportunity for public testimony was provided during the Council meeting. The Council recommended that NMFS issue the EFPs, as requested by the States.

Renewal of these EFPs, to about 40 vessels, would continue an ongoing program to collect information on the incidental catch of salmon and groundfish in whiting harvests delivered to shoreside processing facilities by domestic trawl vessels operating off WOC. Because whiting deteriorates rapidly, it must be handled quickly and immediately chilled to maintain the quality. As a result, many vessels dump catch directly or near directly into the hold and are unable to effectively sort their catch.

The issuance of EFPs will allow vessels to delay sorting of prohibited species and groundfish caught in excess of cumulative trip limits until offloading. Delaying sorting until the vessel offloads will allow state biologists to collect incidental catch data for total catch estimates while maintaining whiting quality. Without an EFP, groundfish regulations at 50 CFR 660.306(b) require vessels to sort out prohibited species and return them to sea as soon as practicable with minimum injury. To allow state biologists to sample unsorted whiting, it is also necessary to include provisions for potential overages of groundfish trip limits which would be otherwise prohibited by regulations at 50 CFR 660.306(h).

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

Dated: March 31, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

[FR Doc. 00-8380 Filed 3-31-00; 3:40 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 990430113-913-01; I.D. 032700C]

Fisheries off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; West Coast Salmon Fisheries; Inseason Adjustments From Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain, OR

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

ACTION: Inseason adjustments; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the commercial and recreational fisheries for all salmon except coho, in the areas from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain, OR, will open April 1, 2000, and continue through dates to be determined in the 2000 management measures for 2000 ocean salmon fisheries in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This action is necessary to conform to the 1999 announcement of management measures for year 2000 salmon seasons opening earlier than May 1, 2000, and is intended to ensure conservation of chinook salmon.

DATES: Effective April 1, 2000, until the effective date of the year 2000 management measures, which will be published in the **Federal Register** for the west coast salmon fisheries. Comments will be accepted through April 20, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Comments on this action must be mailed to William Stelle, Jr., Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, NMFS, NOAA, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0070; or faxed to 206-526-6376; or Rodney McInnis, Acting Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, NOAA, 501 W. Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4132; or faxed to 562-980-4018. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or the Internet. Information relevant to this document is available for public review during business hours at the Office of the Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, NMFS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: William Robinson, 206-526-6140, or Svein Fougner, 562-980-4030.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In the 1999 annual management measures for ocean salmon fisheries (64 FR 24078,

May 5, 1999), NMFS announced that the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) would consider at its March 2000 meeting a recommendation to open commercial and recreational seasons for all salmon except coho in areas off Oregon. Due to the timing of the March and April Council meetings, where the major 2000 salmon seasons are developed, this action is necessary to implement the opening of these seasons prior to May 1, 2000. In the 1999 management measures for 2000 ocean salmon fisheries, NMFS announced that the recreational fishery would not open until May 1, 2000, between Cape Falcon and Humbug Mountain, OR, for all salmon except coho, unless opened following an inseason recommendation of the Council at the March 2000 meeting. In addition, the Council may also consider inseason modifications to open or modify commercial fisheries off Oregon for all salmon except coho, prior to May 1, 2000.

At the March 2000 meeting, the Council made its inseason recommendations to open the recreational and commercial fisheries, for all salmon except coho, from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain, OR, on April 1, 2000. The closing dates for both fisheries will be determined at the April 2000 meeting when the entire 2000 management measures for the 2000 ocean salmon fisheries are finalized.

The recreational fishery for all salmon except coho, from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain, OR, opens on April 1, 2000. The daily possession limit is two fish per day, with no more than six fish retained in 7 consecutive days. The minimum size limit is 20 inches (50.8 cm). Allowed gear is artificial lures and plugs of any size, or bait no less than 6 inches (15.2 cm) long (excluding hooks and swivels). All gear must have no more than two single-point, single-shank, barbless hooks. Divers are prohibited and flashers may only be used with downriggers. Oregon State regulations describe a closure at the mouth of Tillamook Bay.

The commercial fishery for all salmon except coho, from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain, OR, opens on April 1, 2000. No more than four spreads are allowed per line. The minimum size limit is 26 inches (66.0 cm) (19.5 in (49.5 cm) head-off). Chinook not less than 26 inches (66.0 cm) (19.5 inches (49.5 cm) head-off) taken during open seasons south of Cape Falcon may be landed north of Cape Falcon only while the season is closed north of Cape

Falcon. Oregon state regulations describe a closure at the mouth of Tillamook Bay.

The Regional Administrator consulted with representatives of the Council, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California Department Fish and Game regarding these adjustments. As provided by the inseason notification procedures at 50 CFR 660.411, actual notice to fishermen of these actions will be given prior to 0001 hours local time, April 1, 2000, by telephone hotline number 206-526-6667 or 800-662-9825 and by U.S. Coast Guard Notice to Mariners broadcasts on Channel 16 VHF-FM and 2182 kHz.

Because of the need for immediate action, NMFS has determined that good cause exists for this document to be issued without affording a prior opportunity for public comment. This document does not apply to other fisheries that may be operating in other areas.

Classification

This action is authorized by 50 CFR 660.409 and 660.411 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 31, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

[FR Doc. 00-8385 Filed 3-31-00; 3:40 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 000211039-0039-01; I.D. 033100A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in the West Yakutat District in 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 pollock in the West Yakutat District in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to fully utilize the 2000 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time, April 1, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 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.

In accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(ii), the pollock TAC for 2000 in the West Yakutat District of the GOA is 2,340 metric tons (mt) under the Final 2000 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (65 FR 8298, February 18, 2000).

NMFS closed the directed fishery for pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on March 28, 2000 (65 FR 17205, March 31, 2000).

NMFS has determined that currently, approximately 600 mt remain in the directed fishing allowance. Therefore, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is opening directed fishing for pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

Classification

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 pollock TAC. Providing prior notice and opportunity for public comment for this action is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. 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.

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: March 31, 2000.

Gary C. Matlock,

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

[FR Doc. 00-8372 Filed 3-31-00; 3:40 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F