

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 679**

[Docket No. 101126522–0640–02]

RIN 0648–XA678

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Northern Rockfish, Pacific Ocean Perch, and Pelagic Shelf Rockfish for Vessels Participating in the Rockfish Entry Level Fishery

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and pelagic shelf rockfish for vessels participating in the rockfish entry level fishery in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2011 total allowable catch (TAC) of northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and pelagic shelf rockfish allocated to vessels participating in the rockfish entry level fishery in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 1, 2011, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2011.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 907–586–7269.

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 2011 TACs allocated to vessels participating in the entry level rockfish fishery in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska are: 494 metric tons (mt) for Pacific ocean perch, 109 mt for northern rockfish, and 148 mt for pelagic shelf rockfish as established by the final 2011 and 2012 harvest specifications (76 FR 11111, March 1, 2011) for groundfish in the GOA. Section 679.83(a)(2) allows trawl or longline gear vessels participating in the entry level rockfish fishery to harvest any unused northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and pelagic shelf rockfish after 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1, 2011.

As of September 1, 2011, 54 mt for Pacific ocean perch, 109 mt for northern rockfish, and 135 mt for pelagic shelf rockfish remain in the total entry level allocated TACs. In accordance with § 679.83(a)(3), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the remaining 2011 TAC of northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and pelagic shelf rockfish allocated to vessels participating in the entry level longline rockfish fishery in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is insufficient to support directed fishing. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and pelagic shelf rockfish for trawl and longline vessels participating in the rockfish entry level fishery in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at

§ 679.20(e) and (f) and § 679.81(h)(5) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds 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)(B) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of northern rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and pelagic shelf rockfish for vessels participating in the rockfish entry level fishery in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of August 29, 2011.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

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: August 30, 2011.

James P. Burgess,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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