

(B) *ACLs*. The northern silver hake and southern whiting ACLs are equal to 95 percent of the ABCs.

(C) *TALs*. The northern silver hake and southern whiting TALs are equal to the northern silver hake and southern whiting ACLs minus a discard estimate based on the most recent 3 years of data. The northern silver hake and southern whiting TALs are then reduced by 3 percent to account for silver hake and offshore hake landings that occur in state waters.

(3) *Annual Review*. (i) The Small-Mesh Multispecies PDT will meet at least once annually to review the status of the stock and the fishery and the adequacy of the 3-year specifications. Based on such review, the PDT will provide a report to the Council on any changes or new information about the small-mesh multispecies stocks and/or fishery, and it will recommend whether the specifications for the upcoming year(s), established pursuant to paragraph (b)(1) of this section, need to be modified. At a minimum, this review should include a review of at least the following data, if available: Commercial catch data; current estimates of fishing mortality and catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE); discards; stock status; recent estimates of recruitment; virtual population analysis results and other estimates of stock size; sea sampling, port sampling, and survey data or, if sea sampling data are unavailable, length frequency information from port sampling and/or surveys; impact of other fisheries on the mortality of small-mesh multispecies; and any other relevant information.

(ii) If new and/or additional information becomes available, the Small-Mesh Multispecies PDT will consider it during this annual review. Based on this review, the Small-Mesh Multispecies PDT will provide guidance to the Whiting Oversight Committee and the Council regarding the need to adjust measures for the small-mesh multispecies fishery to better achieve the FMP's objectives. After considering this guidance, the Council may submit to NMFS its recommendations for changes to management measures, as appropriate, through the specifications process described in this section, the process specified in paragraph (c) of this section, or through an amendment to the FMP.

(4) *SAFE Report*. (i) The Small-Mesh Multispecies PDT will prepare a SAFE Report at least every 3 years. Based on the SAFE Report, the Small-Mesh Multispecies PDT will develop and present to the Council recommended specifications as defined in paragraph (a) of this section for up to 3 fishing

years. The SAFE Report will be the primary vehicle for the presentation of all updated biological and socio-economic information regarding the small-mesh multispecies fishery. The SAFE Report will provide source data for any adjustments to the management measures that may be needed to continue to meet the goals and objectives of the FMP.

(ii) In any year in which a SAFE Report is not completed by the Small-Mesh Multispecies PDT, the annual review process described in paragraph (a) of this section will be used to recommend any necessary adjustments to specifications and/or management measures in the FMP.

(5) *Accountability measures for the small-mesh multispecies fishery*—(i) *In-season adjustment of possession limits*. If the Regional Administrator projects that 90 percent of a stock area TAL, as defined in § 648.90(b)(3), has been landed, the Regional Administrator shall reduce the possession limit of that stock to the incidental level, as specified in § 648.86(d)(4), for the remainder of the fishing year through notice consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act, unless such a reduction in the possession limit would be expected to prevent the TAL from being reached.

(ii) *Post-season adjustment for an overage*. If NMFS determines that a small-mesh multispecies ACL was exceeded in a given fishing year, the exact amount of the landings overage will be deducted, as soon as is practicable, from a subsequent single fishing year's ACL for that stock, through notification consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act.

(c) * * *

(1) * * *

(ii) *Adjustment process for whiting DAS*. The Council may develop recommendations for a whiting DAS effort reduction program through the framework process outlined in paragraph (c) of this section only if these options are accompanied by a full set of public hearings that span the area affected by the proposed measures in order to provide adequate opportunity for public comment.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 111213751-2102-02]

RIN 0648-XB138

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod for American Fisheries Act Catcher/Processors Using Trawl Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by American Fisheries Act (AFA) trawl catcher/processors in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the B season allowance of the 2012 Pacific cod total allowable catch specified for AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), April 1, 2012, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., June 10, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Obren Davis, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (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 B season allowance of the 2012 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) specified for AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI is 1,340 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (77 FR 10669, February 23, 2012).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i) and (d)(1)(ii)(B), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the B season allowance of the 2012 Pacific cod TAC allocated to AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI will be taken as incidental catch in the directed fishing for other species. Therefore, the

Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 0 mt for Pacific cod allocated to AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI, and is setting aside the remaining 1,340 mt as incidental catch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI.

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Acting 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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of March 26, 2012.

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: March 27, 2012.

Emily H. Menashes,

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. 111207737-2141-02]

RIN 0648-XB113

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: Temporary rule; modification of a closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is opening directed fishing for pollock in the West Yakutat District of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to fully use the 2012 total allowable catch of pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA. **DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 26, 2012, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., August 25, 2012, and applicable beginning March 21, 2012. Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., April 10, 2012.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2012-0069, by any one of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal www.regulations.gov. To submit comments via the e-Rulemaking Portal, first click the "submit a comment" icon, then enter NOAA-NMFS-2012-0069 in the keyword search. Locate the document you wish to comment on from the resulting list and click on the "Submit a Comment" icon on that line.
- **Mail:** Address written comments to Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian. Mail comments to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.
- **Fax:** Address written comments to Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian. Fax comments to 907-586-7557.
- **Hand delivery to the Federal Building:** Address written comments to Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian. Deliver comments to 709 West 9th Street, Room 420A, Juneau, AK.

Instructions: Comments must be submitted by one of the above methods

to ensure that the comments are received, documented, and considered by NMFS. Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address) submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word or Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 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.

NMFS closed directed fishing for pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on March 17, 2012 (77 FR 16481, March 21, 2012).

As of March 20, 2012, NMFS has determined that approximately 950 metric tons of pollock remain in the directed fishing allowance for pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(i)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully utilize the 2012 TAC of pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is reopening directed fishing pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

The Administrator, Alaska Region (Regional Administrator) considered the following factors in reaching this decision: (1) The current catch of pollock in the West Yakutat District of the GOA and, (2) the harvest capacity and stated intent on future harvesting patterns of vessels in participating in this fishery.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained