

Dated: April 7, 2025.

Sue J. Bai,

Supervisory Official, National Security
Division, U.S. Department of Justice.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 250414-0067; RTID 0648-
XE684]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Skate Complex; 2025 Specifications

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

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS is finalizing
specifications for the 2025 Northeast
skate fishery. This action is necessary to

implement previously projected 2025
allowable harvest levels for the skate
fishery that prevent overfishing while
enabling optimum yield.

DATES: Effective May 1, 2025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Caroline Potter, Fishery Resource
Management Specialist, (978) 281-9325.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The
Council manages a complex of seven
skate species (*i.e.*, barndoor, clearnose,
little, rosette, smooth, thorny, and
winter) off the New England and mid-
Atlantic coasts through the Northeast
Skate Complex Fishery Management
Plan (FMP). Skates are harvested and
managed through two different targeted
fisheries: (1) food (*i.e.*, the wing fishery);
and (2) bait in other fisheries (*i.e.*, the
bait fishery). The Northeast Skate
Complex FMP requires that annual
catch and possession limits for the skate
fishery be reviewed annually and
specified through the specifications
process for up to two fishing years at a
time, with the second year subject to
review and change during the
specifications process. Framework
Adjustment 12 to the Northeast Skate

Complex FMP (Framework 12) (89 FR
58076, July 17, 2024) set management
measures and specifications for the
skate fishery for the 2024 fishing year
and projected specifications for the 2025
fishing year. Two comments were
received on the proposed rule for
Framework 12 (89 FR 45621, May 23,
2024). The comments were addressed in
the final rule (89 FR 58076, July 17,
2024), in which we stated that no
changes to the proposed rule's
specifications were necessary as a result
of the comments. Subsequent to
publication of the final rule, the Council
considered the 2025 projected
specifications, the 2024 Skate Annual
Monitoring Report, and other skate
fishery status and performance
information, at its meeting on
September 24, 2024. The Council did
not recommend any changes to the 2025
projected specifications. This action
implements the projected skate
specifications for the 2025 fishing year.

Table 1 summarizes the 2024 and
2025 specifications. No changes have
been made from what was projected in
the final rule for Framework 12 (89 FR
58076, July 17, 2024).

TABLE 1—2024 AND 2025 SKATE FISHERY SPECIFICATIONS, IN METRIC TONS

Acceptable Biological Catch and Annual Catch Limit (ACL)	32,155
Annual Catch Target (90% of ACL)	28,940
Overall Fishery Total Allowable Landings (TAL)	15,718
Wing TAL (66.5% of Overall TAL)	10,453
Wing Season 1 TAL (57% of Wing TAL)	5,958
Wing Season 2 TAL (43% of Wing TAL)	4,495
Bait TAL (33.5% of Overall TAL)	5,266
Bait Season 1 TAL (30.8% of Bait TAL)	1,622
Bait Season 2 TAL (37.1% of Bait TAL)	1,954
Bait Season 3 TAL (32.1% of Bait TAL)	1,690

Classification

NMFS is issuing this rule pursuant to
305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery
Conservation and Management Act,
which authorizes the Secretary to
implement management measures
necessary to carry out an approved
fishery management plan. Skate
specifications are implemented
pursuant to the regulations at 50 CFR
648.320(a)(7). The NMFS Assistant
Administrator has determined that this
final rule is consistent with the
Northeast Skate Complex FMP,
Framework 12, and other applicable
law.

This final rule is exempt from review
under Executive Order 12866, and is not
regulatory under Executive Order
14192.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), NMFS
finds good cause to waive prior public
notice and opportunity for public
comment on this action, because

allowing time for notice and comment
would be unnecessary and contrary to
the public interest. The proposed rule
for Framework 12 provided the public
with the opportunity to comment on the
2024 and projected 2025 specifications
(89 FR 45621, May 23, 2024). NMFS
received two comments on the proposed
rule, which were addressed in the final
rule (89 FR 58076, July 17, 2024), and
determined that no changes to the final
rule were necessary as a result of the
comments. Through both proposed and
final rulemaking for Framework 12,
NMFS alerted the public that a review
of the projected 2025 specifications
would be conducted and that NMFS
would either confirm the specifications
as projected or publish a proposed rule
for any necessary changes prior to the
May 1st start of the 2025 fishing year.
In addition, the Council reviewed the
2025 projected specifications along with
the 2024 Annual Skate Monitoring

Report at its public meeting on
September 24, 2024, which included an
additional opportunity for public
comment. The Council did not
recommend any changes to the
projected specifications. The
opportunity for and consideration of
public comments in the proposed and
final rulemaking process for
implementing Framework 12, combined
with the opportunity for public
comment during the Council's review of
more recent data from the 2024 Annual
Skate Monitoring Report in its
September 24, 2024, public meeting,
have already provided the public with
multiple opportunities to comment on
the 2025 specifications. Providing
additional notice and comment on the
2025 specifications at this point would
be unnecessary. In addition, doing so
even though the 2025 specifications are
unchanged from the 2024 specifications

could cause confusion, and therefore would be contrary to the public interest.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), NMFS finds that there is good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the date of effectiveness for this action. The 2025 fishing year begins on May 1, 2025, and the 2025 specifications are the same as the 2024 specifications. Requiring a 30-day delay before this final rule becomes effective does not provide any benefit to the regulated parties, as no additional time is required to come into compliance with this final rule. Unlike actions that require an adjustment period, skate fishing vessels will not need to purchase new equipment or otherwise expend time or money to comply with these management measures, because compliance simply means adhering to the same catch limits and possession limits as those for the 2024 fishing year. These specifications should be effective by the start of the skate fishing year on May 1, 2025. If this final rule is delayed for a short period, the prior year's specifications would roll over to allow continued operation of the fishery until the 2025 specifications are implemented. However, having the 2025 specifications in place by the start of the fishing season and preventing a rollover could reduce potential confusion about the 2025 specifications.

The Chief Counsel for Regulation, Department of Commerce, previously certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration (SBA) that Framework 12, which set specifications for 2024 and projected specifications for 2025, would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Implementing the 2025 specifications will not change the conclusions drawn in that previous certification to the SBA. No comments were received regarding this prior certification. As a result, no new regulatory flexibility analysis is required and none has been prepared.

This action does not contain a collection of information requirement for purposes of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*).

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

Dated: April 15, 2025.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 250312-0037; RTID 0648-XE857]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Shortraker Rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of shortraker rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) except by catcher/processors checked-in to the Central GOA Rockfish Program who are fishing with a rockfish cooperative quota permit. This action is necessary because the 2025 total allowable catch of shortraker rockfish for vessels other than these catcher/processors has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), April 15, 2025, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Abby Jahn, 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 GOA (FMP) prepared and recommended by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens 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 2025 total allowable catch (TAC) of shortraker rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA for vessels other than catcher/processors checked-in to the Central GOA Rockfish Program who are fishing with a rockfish cooperative quota permit is 113 metric tons as established by the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (90 FR 12468, March 18, 2025).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Regional Administrator has determined that the 2025 TAC of shortraker rockfish for vessels other than catcher/processors checked-in to the Central GOA Rockfish

Program who are fishing with a rockfish cooperative quota permit will soon be or has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that shortraker rockfish for vessels in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(a)(2) for the remainder of the year, except for shortraker rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA caught by catcher vessels using hook-and-line, pot, or jig gear as described in § 679.20(j), or catcher vessels using trawl gear participating in the electronic monitoring program as described in § 679.21(a)(2). This action does not apply to catcher/processors checked in to the Central GOA Rockfish Program who are fishing with a rockfish cooperative quota permit.

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR part 679, which was issued pursuant to section 304(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment would be 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 prohibiting the retention of shortraker rockfish for vessels other than catcher/processors checked-in to the Rockfish Program who are fishing with a rockfish cooperative quota permit. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data on shortraker rockfish catch only became available as of April 14, 2025.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA 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.

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

Dated: April 15, 2025.

Kelly Denit,

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

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