

fishery in the GOA, and therefore reduce the public's ability to use and enjoy the fishery resource.

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.

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 27, 2002.

Virginia M. Fay,

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. 011218304-1304-01; I.D. 082202B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Atka Mackerel Platoons in Areas 542 and 543

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

ACTION: Notification of platoon assignments.

SUMMARY: NMFS is notifying registered vessels of their platoon assignments for the B season Atka mackerel fishery in harvest limit areas (HLA) 542 and/or 543 of the Aleutian Islands subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to allow the harvest of the B season HLA limits established for area 542 and area 543 pursuant to the 2002 Atka mackerel total allowable catch and

associated Steller sea lion protection measures.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), August 28, 2002, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., November 1, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew Smoker, 907-586-7228, or Andy.Smoker@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery 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 the emergency rule implementing 2002 harvest specifications and Steller sea lion protection measures for the groundfish fisheries off Alaska (67 FR 956, January 8, 2002, and 67 FR 47472 July 19, 2002) NMFS established HLAs for Atka mackerel directed fishing in areas 542 and 543. Vessels had until August 1, 2002, to register to fish in the HLA in areas 542 and/or 543. NMFS then is required to randomly assign vessels between these areas to reduce the amount of daily catch in the HLA by about half and to disperse the fishery over time.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(A), ten vessels using trawl gear for directed fishing for Atka mackerel have registered with NMFS to fish in the HLA fisheries in areas 542 and/or 543. In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(B) the Administrator, Alaska Region, has randomly assigned each vessel to the HLA directed fishery for Atka mackerel for which they have registered and is now notifying each vessel of its assignment.

Vessels assigned to Platoon A which will participate in the first HLA directed fishery in area 542 and/or the second HLA directed fishery in area 543 in

accordance with the vessel's registration under § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(A) are as follows: Federal Fishery Permit number (FFP) 4093 Alaska Victory, FFP 3819 Alaska Spirit, FFP 3400 Alaska Ranger, FFP 2134 Ocean Peace, and FFP 1879 American No. 1.

Vessels assigned to Platoon B which will participate in the first HLA directed fishery in area 543 and/or the second HLA directed fishery in area 542 in accordance with the vessel's registration under § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(A) are as follows: FFP 2443 Alaska Juris, FFP 3835 Seafisher, FFP 2733 Seafreeze Alaska, FFP 3423 Alaska Warrior, and FFP 2800 U.S. Intrepid.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds that the need to immediately implement this action that notifies each vessel of their platoon assignment to allow the harvest of the B season HLA limits established for area 542 and area 543 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)(B) and 50 CFR 679.20(a)(8)(iii), as such procedures would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Similarly the need to implement these measures in a timely fashion that notifies each vessel of their platoon assignment to allow the harvest of the B season HLA limits established for area 542 and area 543 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.

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

Dated: August 27, 2002.

Virginia M. Fay,

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