

necessary to prevent exceeding the 2000 interim total allowable catch (ITAC) of Atka mackerel in these areas.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time, January 29, 2000, until superseded by the notice of Final 2000 Harvest Specification for Groundfish, which will be published in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands 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 at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the ITAC for non-jig gear Atka mackerel in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 6,653 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 500 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance soon will be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action responds to the ITAC limitations and other restrictions on the fisheries established in the Interim 2000 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish for the BSAI. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 2000 ITAC of Atka mackerel in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. Further delay would only result in overharvest.

NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not 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: January 28, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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. 000119015-0015-01; I.D. 012800B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the interim 2000 pollock total allowable catch (TAC) for Statistical Area 610 established by the 2000 Interim Specifications and amended by the emergency interim rule implementing Steller sea lion protection measures for the pollock fisheries off Alaska.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 31, 2000, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 15, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew Smoker, 907-581-2062.

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 interim 2000 pollock TAC in Statistical Area 610 as amended by the emergency interim rule implementing Steller sea lion protection measures for the pollock fisheries off Alaska (65 FR 3892, January 25, 2000) is 5,465 metric tons (mt), determined in accordance with § 679.20(c)(2)(i).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the interim TAC of pollock in Statistical Area 610 will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 4,965 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 500 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the seasonal allocation of pollock in Statistical Area 610. Providing prior notice and an opportunity for public comment is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. Further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not 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: January 28, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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