

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 101126522-0640-02]

RIN 0648-XA680

Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Shallow-Water Species Fishery by Vessels Using Trawl Gear in 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 directed fishing for species that comprise the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the fourth seasonal apportionment of the Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 3, 2011, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 1, 2011.

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.

The fourth seasonal apportionment of the Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA is 150 metric tons as established by the final 2011 and 2012 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (76 FR 11111, March 11, 2011), for the period 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1, 2011, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 1, 2011.

In accordance with § 679.21(d)(7)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the fourth seasonal apportionment of the Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl shallow-water species fishery in the GOA has been reached.

Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the GOA. The species and

species groups that comprise the shallow-water species fishery are pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates, and "other species." This prohibition does not apply to fishing for pollock by vessels using pelagic trawl gear in those portions of the GOA open to directed fishing for pollock. This inseason action does not apply to vessels fishing under a cooperative quota permit in the cooperative fishery in the Rockfish Program for the Central GOA.

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 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 the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in 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 30, 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 § 679.21 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: August 31, 2011.

James P. Burgess,

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. 101126521-0640-02]

RIN 0648-XA683

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Octopus in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of octopus in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI). This action is necessary because the 2011 total allowable catch of octopus in the BSAI has been reached.

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: 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 2011 total allowable catch (TAC) of octopus in the BSAI is 150 metric tons as established by the final 2011 and 2012 harvest specifications for groundfish of the BSAI (76 FR 11139, March 1, 2011) and an apportionment from the non-specified reserve of groundfish (76 FR 17360, March 29, 2011).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2011 TAC of octopus in the BSAI has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that octopus caught in the BSAI be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA