

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 12, 1997, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 14, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Patty Britza, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish 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. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(iii), the allowance for the pollock TAC apportioned for vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the AI was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish (62 FR 7168, February 18, 1997) as 16,835 metric tons (mt). The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has established a directed fishing allowance of 14,835 mt, and set aside the remaining 2,000 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. The fishery for pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the AI of the BSAI was closed to directed fishing under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on February 27, 1997, in order to reserve amounts anticipated to be needed for incidental catch in other fisheries (62 FR 9379, March 3, 1997).

NMFS has determined that as of March 10, 1997, 5,257 mt remain in the directed fishing allowance. Therefore, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is opening directed fishing for pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the AI of the BSAI effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 12, 1997.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance will soon be reached. Current information shows the catching capacity of vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component is in excess of 2,200 mt per day.

NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the offshore component in the AI of the BSAI at 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 14, 1997.

All other closures remain in full force and effect.

Classification

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: March 13, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97-6966 Filed 3-14-97; 4:34 pm]

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50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961107312-7021-02; I.D. 031497C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Atka Mackerel in the Central Aleutian District of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the Central Aleutian District of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 1997 total allowable catch (TAC) of Atka mackerel in this area.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 15, 1997, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew Smoker, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS 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. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(iii), the TAC of Atka mackerel for the Central Aleutian District was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the BSAI (62 FR 7168, February 18, 1997) as 19,500 metric tons (mt).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the TAC for Atka mackerel specified for the Central

Aleutian District will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 18,500 mt and is setting aside the remaining 1,000 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 Atka mackerel in the Central Aleutian District.

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

Classification

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: March 14, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97-7028 Filed 3-17-97; 2:51 pm]

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50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961126334-7025-02; I.D. 031497D]

Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Deep-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: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for species that comprise the deep-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the first seasonal bycatch allowance of Pacific halibut apportioned to the deep-water species fishery in the GOA has been caught.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 15, 1997, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Pearson, 907-486-6919.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS 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. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The prohibited species bycatch mortality allowance of Pacific halibut for the GOA trawl deep-water species fishery, which is defined at § 679.21(d)(3)(iii)(B), was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (62 FR 8179, February 24, 1997) for the first season, the period January 20, 1997, through March 31, 1997, as 100 mt.

In accordance with § 679.21(d)(7)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region,

NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the first seasonal apportionment of the 1997 Pacific halibut bycatch mortality allowance specified for the trawl deep-water species fishery in the GOA has been caught. Consequently, the Regional Administrator is closing directed fishing for the deep-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the GOA. The species and species groups that comprise the deep-water species fishery are: All rockfish of the genera *Sebastes* and *Sebastolobus*, Greenland turbot, Dover sole, rex sole, arrowtooth flounder, and sablefish.

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

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR 679.21 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 14, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97-7027 Filed 3-17-97; 2:51 pm]

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