DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 140904754–5188–02]

RIN 0648–BF08

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries Off West Coast States; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; 2015–2016 Biennial Specifications and Management Measures; Inseason Adjustments

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

ACTION: Final rule; inseason adjustments to biennial groundfish management measures.

SUMMARY: This final rule announces inseason changes to management measures in the Pacific Coast groundfish fisheries. This action, which is authorized by the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (PCGFMP), is intended to protect overfished and depleted stocks while allowing fisheries to access more abundant groundfish stocks.

DATES: This final rule is effective June 1, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gretchen Hanshew, phone: 206–526–6147, fax: 206–526–6736, or email: *gretchen.hanshew@noaa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

This rule is accessible via the Internet at the Office of the Federal Register Web site at *https://www.federalregister.gov.* Background information and documents are available at the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Web site at *http://www.pcouncil.org/.* Copies of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the Groundfish Specifications and Management Measures for 2015–2016 and Biennial Periods Thereafter are available from Donald McIsaac, Executive Director, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), 7700 NE. Ambassador Place, Portland, OR 97220, phone: 503–820–2280.

Background

The PCGFMP and its implementing regulations at title 50 in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 660, subparts C through G, regulate fishing for over 90 species of groundfish off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. Groundfish specifications and management measures are developed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), and are implemented by NMFS.

The final rule to implement the 2015–2016 harvest specifications and management measures for most species of the Pacific coast groundfish fishery was published on March 10, 2015 (80 FR 12567).

The Council, in coordination with Pacific Coast Treaty Indian Tribes and the States of Washington, Oregon, and California, recommended changes to current groundfish management measures at its April 10–16, 2015, meeting. Specifically, the Council recommended implementing a trip limit for big skate in the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program and scheduled re-consideration of the stocks ecosystem component (EC) species designation. Consistent with the Council's recommendation and regulations at § 660.12, NMFS is implementing the trip limit and a sorting requirement for big skate in the Shorebased IFQ Program.

Harvest and Management of Big Skate

Up until 2015, big skate was managed as a component stock within the Other Fish complex. The Other Fish complex was comprised of several skate species and other species where catch was low and little information was available to inform stock status. Best available estimates of the overfishing limit (OFL) for component stocks contributed to the OFL harvest specification that was set at for the Other Fish complex. For additional description of the methods used for calculating OFLs for component stocks that are managed in a complex, see proposed rule for the 2011–2012 harvest specifications and management measures (75 FR 67810, November 3, 2010).

During development of the 2015–2016 harvest specifications and management measures the Council, based on the best information available when they made their final recommendation, recommended removing skates except for longnose skate from the Other Fish complex and designating most of the skates including big skate as EC species. NMFS approved and implemented that recommendation. Best estimates of mortality at that time indicated that harvest of big skate was 18 percent of the big skate contribution to the Other Fish OFL. Big skate was designated as an EC species because best available scientific information indicated that it was not in need of conservation and management and that it generally met many of the criteria for EC species designation outlined in the National Standard 1 Guidelines.

Since that time, new information indicates that mortality of big skate is approaching or exceeding the 2014 big skate contribution to the Other Fish OFL and therefore big skate may not be appropriately designated as an EC species. Therefore, at the April meeting, the Council considered management measures to reduce mortality of big skate to a level at or below its 2014 OFL contribution while the Council, its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and NMFS determine how and when to reclassify big skate.

In conjunction with the EC species designation, impacts to the species are monitored to inform whether the designation should be reconsidered based on new information. At its 2015 April meeting, the Council considered new information indicating landings of ''unspecified skate'' were predominantly big skate (over 90 percent) and therefore recent mortality of big skate may be much closer to the 2014 big skate contribution to the Other Fish OFL than previously believed.

Big skate landings are currently sorted and accounted for at a species-specific level in California, but the states of Oregon and Washington report big skate landings combined with other skate species within ''unspecified'' and ''other'' skate categories. As described in statements from the Council's Groundfish Management Team at the April meeting, a coastwide total mortality estimate for big skate was developed using a methodology endorsed by the SSC. Based on this estimate, harvest of big skate in 2014 may have been as high as 500 mt, exceeding the 2014 big skate contribution to the Other Fish OFL of 458 mt. Because in 2014 big skate contributed to the Other Fish complex OFL, and estimated catch of other species in the complex was lower than their respective contributions, the OFL for the Other Fish complex was not exceeded. Therefore, this level of catch of big skate is not overfishing by definition. However, it raised concerns that harvest of the stock may be above the fishing level that would maintain maximum sustainable yield (MSY), and that the designation of this stock as an EC species may not be appropriate.

Reducing Impacts to Big Skate

To reduce the risk of overfishing big skate, the Council considered options for taking inseason action to reduce harvest to a level below the best estimate of the OFL; the 2014 OFL contribution of 458 mt. The Council also considered what changes to

management measures would be necessary to reduce catch to a level below the big skate acceptable biological catch (ABC) contribution of 318 mt to the Other Fish ABC.

Based on available information from the Pacific Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN), catch of big skate occurs predominantly by vessels using bottom trawl gear, which is used primarily in the Shorebased IFQ Program. The Council and NMFS may implement trip limits for big skate as a routine management measure for the Shorebased IFQ Program. Since an action to reduce big skate landings in the Shorebased IFQ Program is anticipated to reduce total impacts to the stock, and because the Council and NMFS can take swift inseason action, the Council dismissed alternatives involving creation of new management measures for other sectors of the groundfish fishery that harvest less big skate. Therefore, the changes to management measures described in this action will apply only to vessels participating in the Shorebased IFQ Program.

The Council considered setting a trip limit for big skate in the Shorebased IFQ Program, beginning in June 2015. A range of trip limits was considered: Unlimited, a high trip limit (37,500 lb per two months) estimated to bring total mortality just below the OFL contribution, and a low trip limit (2,000 lb per two months) estimated to bring total mortality just below the ABC contribution. The Council's recommended a trip limit that was more precautionary than 37,000 lbs per two months but much less restrictive than the 2,000 lbs per two months trip limit to maximize opportunity, while keeping mortality estimates below the OFL contribution. The Council recommended and NMFS is implementing a trip limit reduction from ''unlimited'' to ''15,000 lb per month'' for the month of June, and ''20,000 lbs per two months'' in periods 4–6 (from July through December). Best estimates indicate that total mortality of big skate through the end of 2015 under this trip limit structure would be 441 mt, 17 mt lower than the 2014 OFL contribution of 458 mt. The Council-recommended trip limits are added to Tables 1 (North) and 1 (South) to Subpart C.

It is prohibited for first receivers and catcher vessels in the Shorebased IFQ Program to fail to sort any species with a trip limit (though timing and weighing methods may vary, as described in § 660.140(j)). This is because sorting must occur to account for catch of each species or species group against the applicable trip limit. Analyses presented to the Council at its April 2015 meeting indicated that sorting is necessary for trip limits to be effectively implemented. Therefore, in order to effectively implement the Council's recommended trip limits, NMFS is including in this inseason action the addition of big skate to the list of species required to be sorted under the Shorebased IFQ Program, at § 660.130(d).

The Council acknowledged that the mortality estimates and the OFL contribution have a high degree of uncertainty, and recommended these precautionary management measures described above to reduce the risk of overfishing big skate. Additionally, these measures will increase the amount of species-specific landings information, thereby reducing the uncertainty in estimated landings for both big skate and ''unspecified'' skates. This information will likely prove useful when the Council considers reclassifying big skate in the future.

Reconsideration of EC Species Designation

The Council recommended that reconsideration of the stock's EC species designation be incorporated into development of the 2017–2018 harvest specifications and management measures. That 2017–2018 biennial management process begins at the Council's June 2015 meeting, and will continue into the following year. If a change is made to re-designate big skate as ''in the fishery,'' then harvest specifications for this species would be necessary; therefore it is opportune to consider re-designation of big skate within the biennial harvest specifications process.

Classification

This final rule makes routine inseason adjustments to groundfish fishery management measures, based on the best available information, consistent with the PCGFMP and its implementing regulations.

This action is taken under the authority of 50 CFR 660.60(c) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

The aggregate data upon which these actions are based are available for public inspection at the Office of the Administrator, West Coast Region, NMFS, during business hours.

NMFS finds good cause to waive prior public notice and comment on the revisions to groundfish management measures under 5 U.S.C. 553(b) because notice and comment would be impracticable and contrary to the public interest. Also, for the same reasons, NMFS finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), so that this final rule may become effective June 1, 2015.

New information regarding the likely historical catch of big skate was presented to the Council at its April 2015 meeting. At that meeting, the Council recommended that these changes be implemented June 1, 2015, which is the beginning of a cumulative limit period in the commercial groundfish fishery off the West Coast. These restrictions to the amount of landings must be implemented at the start of a cumulative limit period to allow fishermen in the Shorebased IFQ Program an opportunity to continue harvesting big skate, but at a level that will not exceed the new, lower trip limit that will be imposed for the cumulative limit period. If this limit is not in place by the start of the cumulative limit period, a vessel that landed an amount greater than these limits early in the cumulative limit period would find themselves in violation of this new, lower trip limit. The trip limits recommended by the Council and implemented by NMFS in this action are anticipated to keep catch of big skate below its contribution to the Other Fish OFL, if implemented on June 1. If the recommended limits are not in place June 1, more restrictive measures may be necessary later in the year to keep catch of big skate below its contribution to the Other Fish OFL. There was not sufficient time after the April meeting to undergo proposed and final rulemaking before June 1. For the actions to be implemented in this final rule, affording the time necessary for prior notice and opportunity for public comment would prevent NMFS from managing fisheries using the best available science to prevent overfishing in accordance with the PCGFMP and applicable law. It would be contrary to the public interest to delay implementation of these changes until after public notice and comment, because making this regulatory change by June 1, 2015, allows harvest as intended by the Council, consistent with the best scientific information available. These changes allow continued harvest in fisheries that are important to coastal communities while continuing to prevent potential overfishing.

No aspect of this action is controversial, and changes of this nature were anticipated in the biennial harvest specifications and management measures established for 2015–2016.

Accordingly, for the reasons stated above, NMFS finds good cause to waive

prior notice and comment and to waive the delay in effectiveness.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 660

Fisheries, Fishing, and Indian fisheries.

Dated: June 1, 2015.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 660 is amended as follows:

PART 660—FISHERIES OFF WEST COAST STATES

■ 1. The authority citation for part 660 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.,* 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.,* and 16 U.S.C. 7001 *et seq.*

■ 2. In § 660.130, revise paragraph (d)(1)(i) to read as follows:

§ 660.130 Trawl fishery—management measures.

* * * * *

(d) * * *

(1) * * *

(i) *Coastwide.* Widow rockfish, canary rockfish, darkblotched rockfish, yelloweye rockfish, shortbelly rockfish, black rockfish, blue rockfish, minor nearshore rockfish, minor shelf rockfish, minor slope rockfish, shortraker rockfish, rougheye/blackspotted rockfish, shortspine and longspine thornyhead, Dover sole, arrowtooth flounder, petrale sole, starry flounder, English sole, other flatfish, lingcod, sablefish, Pacific cod, spiny dogfish, other fish, longnose skate, and Pacific whiting; and big skate in the Shorebased IFQ Program;

* * * * *

■ 3. Table 1 (North) and 1 (South) to part 660, subpart D, are revised to read as follows:

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

Table 1 (North) to Part 660, Subpart D -- Limited Entry Trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas and Landing Allowances for non-IFQ Species and Pacific Whiting North of 40°10' N. Lat.

This table describes Rockfish Conservation Areas for vessels using groundfish trawl gear. This table describes incidental landing allowances for vessels registered to a Federal limited entry trawl permit and using groundfish trawl or groundfish non-trawl gears to harvest individual fishing quota (IFQ) species.

Other Limits and Requirements Apply -- Read § 660.10 - § 660.399 before using this table

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TABLE 1 (North)

		JAN-FEB	MAR-APR	MAY-JUN	JUL-AUG	SEP-OCT	NOV-DEC
Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA)1/:							
1	North of 48°10' N. lat.	shore - modified[2/] 200 fm line[1/]	shore - 200 fm line [1/]	shore - 150 fm line[1/]		shore - 200 fm line[1/]	shore - modified[2/] 200 fm line[1/]
2	48°10' N. lat. - 45°46' N. lat.	100 fm line[1/] - 150 fm line[1/]					
3	45°46' N. lat. - 40°10' N. lat.	100 fm line[1/] - modified[2/] 200 fm line[1/]					

Selective flatfish trawl gear is required shoreward of the RCA; all bottom trawl gear (large footrope, selective flatfish trawl, and small footrope trawl gear) is permitted seaward of the RCA. Large footrope and small footrope trawl gears (except for selective flatfish trawl gear) are prohibited shoreward of the RCA. Midwater trawl gear is permitted only for vessels participating in the primary whiting season. **Vessels fishing groundfish trawl quota pounds with groundfish non-trawl gears, under gear switching provisions at § 660.140, are subject to the limited entry groundfish trawl fishery landing allowances in this table, regardless of the type of fishing gear used. Vessels fishing groundfish trawl quota pounds with groundfish non-trawl gears, under gear switching provisions at § 660.140, are subject to the limited entry fixed gear non-trawl RCA, as described in Tables 2 (North) and 2 (South) to Part 660, Subpart E.**

See § 660.60, § 660.130, and § 660.140 for Additional Gear, Trip Limit, and Conservation Area Requirements and Restrictions. See §§ 660.70-660.74 and §§ 660.76-660.79 for Conservation Area Descriptions and Coordinates (including RCAs, YRCA, CCAs, Farallon Islands, Cordell Banks, and EFHCAs).

State trip limits and seasons may be more restrictive than federal trip limits, particularly in waters off Oregon and California.

4	**Minor Nearshore Rockfish & Black rockfish**	300 lb/ month					
5	**Whiting[3/]**						
6	midwater trawl	Before the primary whiting season: CLOSED. -- During the primary season: mid-water trawl permitted in the RCA. See §660.131 for season and trip limit details. -- After the primary whiting season: CLOSED.					
7	large & small footrope gear	Before the primary whiting season: 20,000 lb/trip. -- During the primary season: 10,000 lb/trip. -- After the primary whiting season: 10,000 lb/trip.					
8	**Cabezon[4/]**						
9	North of 46°16' N. lat.	Unlimited					
10	46°16' N. lat. - 40°10' N. lat.	50 lb/ month					
11	**Shortbelly**	Unlimited					
12	**Spiny dogfish**	60,000 lb/ month					
13	**Big skate**	Unlimited			15,000 lb/ month	20,000 lb/ 2 months	
14	**Longnose skate**	Unlimited					
15	**Other Fish [4/]**	Unlimited					

1/ The Rockfish Conservation Area is an area closed to fishing by particular gear types, bounded by lines specifically defined by latitude and longitude coordinates set out at §§ 660.71-660.74. This RCA is not defined by depth contours, and the boundary lines that define the RCA may close areas that are deeper or shallower than the depth contour. Vessels that are subject to the RCA restrictions may not fish in the RCA, or operate in the RCA for any purpose other than transiting.

2/ The "modified" fathom lines are modified to exclude certain petrale sole areas from the RCA.

3/ As specificed at §660.131(d), when fishing in the Eureka Area, no more than 10,000 lb of whiting may be taken and retained, possessed, or landed by a vessel that, at any time during the fishing trip, fished in the fishery management area shoreward of 100 fm contour.

4/ "Other Fish" are defined at § 660.11 and include kelp greenling, leopard shark, and cabezon in Washington

To convert pounds to kilograms, divide by 2.20462, the number of pounds in one kilogram.

Table 1 (South) to Part 660, Subpart D -- Limited Entry Trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas and Landing Allowances for non-IFQ Species and Pacific Whiting South of 40°10' N. Lat.

This table describes Rockfish Conservation Areas for vessels using groundfish trawl gear. This table describes incidental landing allowances for vessels registered to a Federal limited entry trawl permit and using groundfish trawl or groundfish non-trawl gears to harvest individual fishing quota (IFQ) species.

Other Limits and Requirements Apply -- Read § 660.10 - § 660.399 before using this table

06012015

TABLE 1 (South)

		JAN-FEB	MAR-APR	MAY-JUN	JUL-AUG	SEP-OCT	NOV-DEC
	Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA)1/:						
1	South of 40°10' N. lat.	100 fm line[1/] - 150 fm line [1/ 2/]					
	Small footrope trawl gear is required shoreward of the RCA; all trawl gear (large footrope, selective flatfish trawl, midwater trawl, and small footrope trawl gear) is permitted seaward of the RCA. Large footrope trawl gear and midwater trawl gear are prohibited shoreward of the RCA. **Vessels fishing groundfish trawl quota pounds with groundfish non-trawl gears, under gear switching provisions at § 660.140, are subject to the limited entry groundfish trawl fishery landing allowances in this table, regardless of the type of fishing gear used. Vessels fishing groundfish trawl quota pounds with groundfish non-trawl gears, under gear switching provisions at § 660.140, are subject to the limited entry fixed gear non-trawl RCA, as described in Tables 2 (North) and 2 (South) to Part 660, Subpart E.**						
	See § 660.60, § 660.130, and § 660.140 for Additional Gear, Trip Limit, and Conservation Area Requirements and Restrictions. See §§ 660.70-660.74 and §§ 660.76-660.79 for Conservation Area Descriptions and Coordinates (including RCAs, YRCA, CCAs, Farallon Islands, Cordell Banks, and EFHCAs).						
	State trip limits and seasons may be more restrictive than federal trip limits, particularly in waters off Oregon and California.						
2	**Longspine thornyhead**						
3	South of 34°27' N. lat.	24,000 lb/ 2 months					
4	**Minor Nearshore Rockfish & Black rockfish**	300 lb/ month					
5	**Whiting**						
6	midwater trawl	Before the primary whiting season: CLOSED. -- During the primary season: mid-water trawl permitted in the RCA. See §660.131 for season and trip limit details. -- After the primary whiting season: CLOSED.					
7	large & small footrope gear	Before the primary whiting season: 20,000 lb/trip. -- During the primary season: 10,000 lb/trip. -- After the primary whiting season: 10,000 lb/trip.					
8	**Cabezon**	50 lb/ month					
9	**Shortbelly**	Unlimited					
10	**Spiny dogfish**	60,000 lb/ month					
11	**Big skate**	Unlimited		15,000 lb/ month	20,000 lb/ 2 months		
12	**Longnose skate**	Unlimited					
13	**California scorpionfish**	Unlimited					
14	**Other Fish** [3/]	Unlimited					

1/ The Rockfish Conservation Area is an area closed to fishing by particular gear types, bounded by lines specifically defined by latitude and longitude coordinates set out at §§ 660.71-660.74. This RCA is not defined by depth contours, and the boundary lines that define the RCA may close areas that are deeper or shallower than the depth contour. Vessels that are subject to the RCA restrictions may not fish in the RCA, or operate in the RCA for any purpose other than transiting.

2/ South of 34°27' N. lat., the RCA is 100 fm line - 150 fm line along the mainland coast; shoreline - 150 fm line around islands.

3/ "Other Fish" are defined at § 660.11 and include kelp greenling, leopard shark, and cabezon in Washington

To convert pounds to kilograms, divide by 2.20462, the number of pounds in one kilogram.

[FR Doc. 2015–13635 Filed 6–1–15; 4:15 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 665

[Docket No. 140113035–5475–02]

RIN 0648–XD082

Pacific Island Fisheries; 2014–15 Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures; Main Hawaiian Islands Deep 7 Bottomfish

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

ACTION: Final specifications.

SUMMARY: NMFS specifies an annual catch limit (ACL) of 346,000 lb for Deep 7 bottomfish in the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) for the 2014–15 fishing year. As an accountability measure (AM), if the ACL is projected to be reached, NMFS would close the commercial and non-commercial fisheries for MHI Deep 7 bottomfish for the remainder of the fishing year. The ACL and AM specifications support the long-term sustainability of Hawaii bottomfish.

DATES: The final specifications are effective from July 6, 2015, through August 31, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Hawaiian Archipelago are available from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, tel 808–522–8220, fax 808–522–8226, or *www.wpcouncil.org.* Copies of the environmental assessments and findings of no significant impact for this action, identified by NOAA–NMFS–2013–0176, are available from *www.regulations.gov,* or from Michael D. Tosatto, Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific Islands Region (PIR), 1845 Wasp Blvd. Bldg. 176, Honolulu, HI 96818.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jarad Makaiau, NMFS PIR Sustainable Fisheries, 808–725–5176.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On April 21, 2015, NMFS published proposed specifications and a request for public comments (80 FR 22158) for the Deep 7 bottomfish in the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) for the 2014–15 fishing year. You may review additional background information on this action in the preamble to the proposed specifications; we do not repeat this information here.

Through this action, NMFS is specifying an ACL of 346,000 lb of Deep 7 bottomfish in the MHI for the 2014–15 fishing year. This ACL is the same as that set for the 2013–14 fishing year. The MHI Management Subarea is the portion of U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone around the Hawaiian Archipelago lying to the east of 161°20′ W. longitude. The Deep 7 bottomfish consist of: onaga (*Etelis coruscans*), ehu (*E. carbunculus*), gindai (*Pristipomoides zonatus*), kalekale (*P. sieboldii*), opakapaka (*P. filamentosus*), lehi (*Aphareus rutilans*), and hapuupuu (*Epinephelus quernus*). The ACL that is established by this final rule adopts the Council's recommended ACL, which was based on the best available scientific, commercial, and other information, taking into account the associated risk of overfishing.

The MHI bottomfish fishing year started September 1, 2014, and is currently open. NMFS will monitor the fishery, and if the fishery reaches the ACL before August 31, 2015, NMFS will, as an associated accountability measure authorized in 50 CFR 665.4(f), close the non-commercial and commercial fisheries for Deep 7 bottomfish in Federal waters through August 31. During a fishery closure for Deep 7 bottomfish, no person may fish for, possess, or sell any of these fish in the MHI. There is no prohibition on fishing for or selling other (*non*-Deep 7) bottomfish throughout the year. All other management measures continue to apply in the MHI bottomfish fishery.

Comments and Responses

The comment period for the proposed specifications ended on May 6, 2015. NMFS received comments from three individuals, including two fishermen who participate in the Deep 7 bottomfish fishery, all in support of the proposed action.

Comments: In addition to expressing support for the proposed specifications, two commenters provided suggestions for improving future bottomfish stock assessments. The suggestions included increasing fishermen involvement in the development of stock assessment models, incorporating the potential effects of bottomfish restricted fishing areas in estimating exploitable biomass, and refining catch per unit of effort methodologies by better accounting for differences in catchability of bottomfish between fishermen of the various Hawaiian Islands due differences in available fishing areas, fishing strategies, and environmental factors.

Response: While these comments are beyond the immediate scope of the proposed specifications, NMFS continues to make improvements in the stock assessment process, and will consider the recommended actions in future stock assessments and updates. Additionally, NMFS is already reaching out to fishermen to ensure that their input is considered at important points in the bottomfish stock assessment process. NMFS continues to explore fishery-independent methods and technologies for assessing bottomfish resources. As information becomes available, NMFS will accommodate such data in future stock assessments to improve our understanding of the condition of bottomfish resources.

Changes From the Proposed Specifications

There are no changes in the final specifications from what was published in the proposed specifications on April 21, 2015.

Classification

The Regional Administrator, NMFS PIR, determined that this action is necessary for the conservation and management of MHI Deep 7 bottomfish, and that it is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and other applicable laws.

The Chief Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration during the proposed specification stage that this action would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. NMFS published the factual basis for certification in the proposed specifications, and does not repeat it here. NMFS did not receive comments regarding this certification. As a result, a final regulatory flexibility analysis is not required, and one was not prepared.

This action is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: May 29, 2015.

Samuel D. Rauch III,

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

[FR Doc. 2015–13605 Filed 6–3–15; 8:45 am]

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