

Dated: March 10, 2004.

**Craig Manson,**

*Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.*

[FR Doc. 04-5925 Filed 3-16-04; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 031124287-4060-02; I.D. 031104A]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher/Processor Vessels Using Hook-and-line Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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

**ACTION:** Closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher/processor vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season apportionment of the 2004 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod allocated for catcher/processor vessels using hook-and-line gear in this area.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 13, 2004, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., August 15, 2004.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Josh Keaton, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI 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 appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2004 Pacific cod TAC, specified in the 2004 final harvest specifications for groundfish of the BSAI (69 FR 9242, February 27, 2004), allocated to catcher/processor vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI, a directed Pacific cod fishing allowance of 48,558 metric tons for the period 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 1, 2004, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., June

10, 2004. See § 679.20(c)(3)(iii), § 679.20(c)(5), and § 679.20(a)(7)(i)(A) and (C).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the A season apportionment of the 2004 Pacific cod TAC allocated as a directed fishing allowance to catcher/processor vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher/processor vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI.

#### 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 the Agency from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of Pacific cod specified for catcher/processor vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI.

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 § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 11, 2004.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**

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

[FR Doc. 04-6028 Filed 3-12-04; 2:59 pm]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 031124287-4060-02; I.D. 031204B]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher/Processor Vessels Using Trawl Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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

**ACTION:** Closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher/processor vessels using trawl gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allocation of the 2004 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod specified for catcher/processor vessels using trawl gear in this area.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 14, 2004, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2004.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI 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 appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2004 final harvest specifications for groundfish of the BSAI (69 FR 9242, February 27, 2004), established the Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher/processor vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI for the period 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 1, 2004, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2004 as 23,422 metric tons (mt). See § 679.20(c)(3)(iii), § 679.20(c)(5), and § 679.20(a)(7)(i)(A) and (C).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the A season allocation of the 2004 Pacific cod TAC specified for catcher/processor vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed

fishing allowance of 22,922 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 be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher/processor vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI.

#### 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 the Agency from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure the A season allocation of Pacific cod specified for catcher/processor vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI.

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 § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 12, 2004.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service*  
[FR Doc. 04-6030 Filed 3-12-04; 3:00 pm]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 031125292-4061-02; I.D. 031204A]

#### 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 B season pollock total allowable catch (TAC) for Statistical Area 610 of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 13, 2004, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., August 25, 2004.

**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 B season allowance of the pollock TAC in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA is 3,748 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2004 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (69 FR 9261, February 27, 2004). In accordance with § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B) the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), hereby increases the B season pollock TAC by 436 mt, the amount of the A season pollock allowance in Statistical Area 610 that was not previously taken in the A season. The revised B season allowance

of pollock TAC in Statistical Area 610 is therefore 4,184 mt (3,748 mt plus 436 mt).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator, has determined that the revised B season allowance of the pollock TAC in Statistical Area 610 will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 3,784 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 400 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.

#### 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 the Agency from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of the B season pollock TAC in Statistical Area 610.

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 § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 12, 2004.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service*  
[FR Doc. 04-6029 Filed 3-12-04; 2:59 pm]

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