

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 679**

[Docket No. 200221-0062; RTID 0648-XA772]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 610 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 pollock in Statistical Area 610 in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2021 total allowable catch of pollock for Statistical Area 610 in the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 20, 2021, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., May 31, 2021.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Krista Milani, 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 A season allowance of the 2021 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA is 799 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (85 FR 13802, March 10, 2020) and inseason adjustment (85 FR 83834, December 23, 2020).

In accordance with §§ 679.20(d)(1)(i) and 679.20(d)(1)(ii)(B), the Regional Administrator has determined that the A season allowance of the 2021 TAC of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA is necessary to account for the incidental catch in other anticipated fisheries. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 0 mt and is setting aside the remaining 799 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 has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA.

While this closure is effective the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR part 679, which was issued pursuant to section 304(b), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment would be 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 pollock in Statistical Area 610 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 December 30, 2020.

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

Dated: January 4, 2021.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

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