

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

[Docket No. 000211039-0039-01; I.D. 082900A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 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 630 of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the C season allowance of the pollock total allowable catch (TAC) for Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), August 29, 2000, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 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 pollock TAC in Statistical Area 630 was established by the Final 2000 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish for the GOA (65 FR 8298, February 18, 2000, and subsequent correction 65 FR 11909, March 7, 2000) as 24,501 metric tons (mt) for the entire fishing year and 9,008 mt for the C season allowance.

The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the A and B seasonal catch was in excess of the allowances by 5,640 mt and that the excess shall be proportionately subtracted from the subsequent seasonal allowances. In accordance with § 679.20(a)(5)(ii)(C), the C seasonal allowance of pollock TAC in Statistical Area 630 is 5,931 mt.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the C season allowance of the pollock TAC in Statistical Area 630 will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 5,731 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 200 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 630 of the GOA.

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

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the seasonal allocation of pollock in Statistical Area 630. Providing prior notice and an opportunity for public comment is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. Further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

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: August 29, 2000.

Richard W. Surdi

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