

This action is required by § 680.22 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: February 25, 2008.

**James P. Burgess,**

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

[FR Doc. 08–894 Filed 2–26–08; 3:12 pm]

**BILLING CODE 3510–22–S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 070213032–7032–01]

RIN 0648–XF94

#### **Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Non-American Fisheries Act Crab Vessels Catching Pacific Cod for Processing by the Offshore Component in the Western Regulatory Area of 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 the A season allowance of the 2008 Pacific cod sideboard limits apportioned to non-American Fisheries Act (AFA) crab vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2008 Pacific cod sideboard limits apportioned to non-AFA crab vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 27, 2008, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1, 2008.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jennifer Hogan, 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. Regulations governing sideboard protections for GOA groundfish fisheries appear at subpart B of 50 CFR part 680.

The A season allowance of 2008 Pacific cod sideboard limits apportioned to non-AFA crab vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 239 metric tons (mt) for the GOA, as established by the 2008 and 2009 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (published on February 27, 2008).

In accordance with § 680.22(e)(2)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the A season allowance of the 2008 Pacific cod sideboard limits apportioned to non-AFA crab vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a sideboard directed fishing allowance for Pacific cod as 229 mt in the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. The remaining 10 mt in the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will be set aside as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 680.22(e)(3), the Regional Administrator finds that this sideboard directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by non-AFA crab vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

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

#### **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 NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the sideboard directed fishing closure of Pacific cod apportioned to non-AFA crab vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the offshore

component in the Western Regulatory Area of 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 February 25, 2008.

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

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

Dated: February 26, 2008.

**James P. Burgess**

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

[FR Doc. 08–895 Filed 2–26–08; 3:12 pm]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 070213032–7032–01]

RIN 0648–XF90

#### **Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Vessels Catching Pacific Cod for Processing by the Inshore Component in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska**

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; modification of a closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is opening directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) for 24 hours. This action is necessary to fully use the A season allowance of the 2008 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component of the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 29, 2008, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 1, 2008. Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., March 12, 2008.

**ADDRESSES:** Send comments to Sue Salveson, Assistant Regional

Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian. You may submit comments, identified by 0648–XF90, by any one of the following methods:

- Electronic Submissions: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal eRulemaking Portal website at <http://www.regulations.gov>;

- Mail: P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802;

- Fax: (907) 586–7557; or

- Hand delivery to the Federal Building: 709 West 9th Street, Room 420A, Juneau, AK.

Instructions: All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All Personal Identifying Information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

NMFS will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jennifer Hogan, 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.

NMFS closed the directed fishery for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA under § 679.20(d)(1)(iii) on February 20, 2008 (73 FR 9707, February 22, 2008).

NMFS has determined that approximately 2,400 mt of Pacific cod remain in the directed fishing allowance for vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(i)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully utilize the A season allowance of the 2008 TAC of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is reopening directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance will be reached after 24 hours. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., March 1, 2008.

#### 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 NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the opening of Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of 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 February 25, 2008.

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.

Without this inseason adjustment, NMFS could not allow the fishery for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA to be harvested in an expedient manner and in accordance with the regulatory schedule. Under § 679.25(c)(2), interested persons are invited to submit written comments on this action to the above address until March 12, 2008.

This action is required by § 679.20 and § 679.25 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: February 26, 2008.

**James P. Burgess**

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

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