

**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 closure of directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels greater than or equal to 60 feet (18.3m) LOA using pot gear in the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of January 23, 2017.

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: January 27, 2017.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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

[Docket No. 141021887-5172-02]

**RIN 0648-XF169**

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pacific Cod in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area**

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; reallocation.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is reallocating the projected unused amount of Pacific cod from vessels using jig gear to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 meters)

length overall using hook-and-line or pot gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area. This action is necessary to allow the A season apportionment of the 2017 total allowable catch of Pacific cod to be harvested.

**DATES:** Effective January 27, 2017, through 2400 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 31, 2017.

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

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management 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 A season apportionment of the 2017 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) specified for vessels using jig gear in the BSAI is 1,796 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (81 FR 14773, March 18, 2016) and inseason adjustment (82 FR 2916, January 10, 2017).

The 2017 Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 meters(m)) length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI is 4,259 mt as established by final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (81 FR 14773, March 18, 2016) and inseason adjustment (82 FR 2916, January 10, 2017).

The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that jig vessels will not be able to harvest 1,700 mt of the A season apportionment of the 2017 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(7)(ii)(A)(1). Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(a)(7)(iv)(C), NMFS apportions 1,700 mt of Pacific cod from the A season jig gear apportionment to the annual amount specified for catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear.

The harvest specifications for Pacific cod included in final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (81 FR 14773, March 18, 2016) and inseason adjustment (82 FR 2916, January 10, 2017) are revised as follows: 96 mt to the A season apportionment and 1,293 mt to the annual amount for vessels using jig gear, and 5,959 mt to

catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear.

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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: January 27, 2017.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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