

**Classification***IPHC Regulations*

These IPHC annual management measures are a product of an agreement between the United States and Canada and are published in the **Federal Register** to provide notice of their effectiveness and content. Pursuant to section 4 of the Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982, 16 U.S.C. 773c, the Secretary of State, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Commerce, may “accept or reject” but not modify these recommendations of the IPHC. The notice-and-comment and delay-in-effectiveness date provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), 5 U.S.C. 553(b) and (d), are inapplicable to IPHC management measures because this regulation involves a foreign affairs function of the United States, 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(1). As stated above, the Secretary of State has no discretion to modify the recommendations of the IPHC. The additional time necessary to comply with the notice-and-comment and delay-in-effectiveness requirements of the APA would disrupt coordinated international conservation and management of the halibut fishery pursuant to the Convention. Furthermore, no other law requires prior notice and public comment for this rule. Because prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required to be provided for these portions of this rule by 5 U.S.C. 553, or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*, are not applicable. Accordingly, no Regulatory Flexibility Analysis is required for this portion of the rule and none has been prepared. This final rule has been determined to be not significant for the purposes of Executive Order 12866.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*

Dated: March 6, 2018.

**Samuel D. Rauch III,**

*Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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

[Docket No. 170816769-8162-02]

**RIN 0648-XF893**

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Hook-and-Line Catcher/Processors 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; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by hook-and-line catcher/processors in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to hook-and-line catcher/processors in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 6, 2018, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., June 10, 2018.

**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. Regulations governing sideboard protections for GOA groundfish fisheries appear at subpart B of 50 CFR part 680.

The A season allowance of the 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to hook-and-line catcher/processors in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 248 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (83 FR 8786, March 1, 2018).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the A season allowance

of the 2018 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to hook-and-line catcher/processors in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 238 mt and is setting aside the remaining 10 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 Pacific cod by hook-and-line catcher/processors in the Central 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 directed fishing closure of Pacific cod by hook-and-line catcher/processors 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 March 5, 2018.

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 6, 2018.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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