

General category 2020 January subquota period and 143 mt for the Reserve category (85 FR 6828, February 6, 2020).

Closure of the January 2020 General Category Fishery

Based on the best available General category BFT Landings information (*i.e.*, 88.1 mt landed as of February 21, 2020), as well as average catch rates and anticipated fishing conditions, NMFS projects that the adjusted General category January 2020 subquota of 100 mt will be reached shortly, and that the General category fishery should be closed. Therefore, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant BFT by persons aboard vessels permitted in the Atlantic tunas General category and the HMS Charter/Headboat category (while fishing commercially) must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time on February 24, 2020. The General category will reopen automatically on June 1, 2020, for the June through August 2020 subquota period. This action applies to those vessels permitted in the General category, as well as to those HMS Charter/Headboat permitted vessels with a commercial sale endorsement when fishing commercially for BFT. For information regarding the HMS Charter/Headboat commercial sale endorsement, see 82 FR 57543, December 6, 2017. The intent of this closure is to prevent overharvest of the available January subquota.

Fishermen may catch and release (or tag and release) BFT of all sizes, subject to the requirements of the catch-and-release and tag-and-release programs at § 635.26. All BFT that are released must be handled in a manner that will maximize their survival, and without removing the fish from the water, consistent with requirements at § 635.21(a)(1). For additional information on safe handling, see the "Careful Catch and Release" brochure available at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/outreach-and-education/careful-catch-and-release-brochure/>.

Monitoring and Reporting

NMFS will continue to monitor the BFT fisheries closely. Dealers are required to submit landing reports within 24 hours of a dealer receiving BFT. Late reporting by dealers compromises NMFS' ability to timely implement actions such as quota and retention limit adjustment, as well as closures, and may result in enforcement actions. Additionally, and separate from the dealer reporting requirement, General and HMS Charter/Headboat category vessel owners are required to report the catch of all BFT retained or

discarded dead within 24 hours of the landing(s) or end of each trip, by accessing hmspermits.noaa.gov, using the HMS Catch Reporting app, or calling (888) 872-8862 (Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.).

Classification

The Assistant Administrator for NMFS (AA) finds that it is impracticable and contrary to the public interest to provide prior notice of, and an opportunity for public comment on, this action for the following reasons:

The regulations implementing the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments provide for inseason retention limit adjustments and fishery closures to respond to the unpredictable nature of BFT availability on the fishing grounds, the migratory nature of this species, and the regional variations in the BFT fishery. These fisheries are currently underway and delaying this action would be contrary to the public interest as it could result in BFT landings exceeding the January 2020 subquota, which could result in the need to reduce quota for the General category later in the year and thus could affect later fishing opportunities. Therefore, the AA finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment. For all of the above reasons, there is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

This action is being taken under § 635.28(a)(1) (BFT fishery closures), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 21, 2020.

Karyl K. Brewster-Geisz,
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. 180831813-9170-02]

RTID 0648-XY071

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 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 630 in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2020 total allowable catch of pollock for Statistical Area 630 in the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 23, 2020, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 10, 2020.

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.

The A season allowance of the 2020 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA is 5,783 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019) and inseason adjustment (84 FR 70436, December 23, 2019).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator has determined that the A season allowance of the 2020 TAC of pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 300 mt and is setting aside the remaining 5,483 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 630 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

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 pollock in Statistical Area 630 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 20, 2020.

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: February 21, 2020.

Karyl K. Brewster-Geisz,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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