

provisions regarding closures and the 2023 quota levels were put in place.

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

Dated: August 30, 2023.

Jennifer M. Wallace,
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. 230224–0053; RTID 0648–
XD305]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels Using Trawl Gear 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 catcher vessels
using trawl gear in the Central
Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska
(GOA). This action is necessary to
prevent exceeding the 2023 total
allowable catch of Pacific cod by catcher
vessels using trawl gear in the Central
Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska
local time (A.l.t.), September 1, 2023,
through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31,
2023.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Abby Jahn, 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 2023 Pacific cod total allowable
catch (TAC) apportioned to catcher
vessels using trawl gear in the Central
Regulatory Area of the GOA not
participating in the cooperative fishery
of the Rockfish Program is 4,155 metric
tons (mt) as established by the final
2023 and 2024 harvest specifications for
groundfish in the GOA (88 FR 13238,
March 2, 2023).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i),
the Regional Administrator has
determined that the 2023 Pacific cod
TAC apportioned to catcher vessels
using trawl gear in the Central
Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon
be reached. Therefore, the Regional
Administrator is establishing a directed
fishing allowance of 3,155 mt and is
setting aside the remaining 1,000 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
catcher vessels using trawl gear in the
Central Regulatory Area 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. This closure does not
apply to fishing by vessels participating
in the cooperative fishery of the
Rockfish Program for the Central GOA.

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to
section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens
Act. This action is required by 50 CFR
part 679, which was issued pursuant to
section 304(b), and is exempt from
review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there
is good cause to waive prior notice and
an opportunity for public comment on
this action, as notice and comment
would be 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 Pacific
cod by catcher vessels using trawl gear
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 August 28, 2023.

The Assistant Administrator for
Fisheries, NOAA 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.

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

Dated: August 29, 2023.

Jennifer M. Wallace,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable
Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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