

permit to a new vessel during the primary sablefish season described at § 660.372(b) (generally April 1 through October 31), the initial permit owner (transferor) must certify on the application form the cumulative quantity, in round weight, of primary season sablefish landed against that permit as of the application signature date for the then current primary season. The new permit owner or holder (transferee) associated with the new vessel must sign the application form acknowledging the amount of landings to date given by the transferor. This certified amount should match the total amount of primary season sablefish landings reported on state fish tickets. As required at § 660.303(c), any person landing sablefish must retain on board the vessel from which sablefish is landed, and provide to an authorized officer upon request, copies of any and all reports of sablefish landings from the primary season containing all data, and in the exact manner, required by the applicable state law throughout the primary sablefish season during which a landing occurred and for 15 days thereafter.

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(g) *Application and supplemental documentation.* * * *

(2) For a request to change a vessel registration and/or change in permit ownership or permit holder for sablefish-endorsed permits with a tier assignment for which a corporation or partnership is listed as permit owner and/or holder, an Identification of Ownership Interest Form must be completed and included with the application form.

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■ 7. In § 660.372, paragraph (b)(1) is revised and paragraph (b)(4) is added to read as follows:

§ 660.372 Fixed gear sablefish fishery management.

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(b) * * *

(1) *Season dates.* North of 36E N. lat., the primary sablefish season for the limited entry, fixed gear, sablefish-endorsed vessels begins at 12 noon l.t. on April 1 and ends at 12 noon l.t. on October 31, unless otherwise announced by the Regional Administrator through the routine management measures process described at § 660.370(c).

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(4) *Owner-on-board Requirement.* Beginning January 1, 2007, any person who owns or has ownership interest in a limited entry permit with a sablefish endorsement, as described at § 660.334(d), must be on board the

vessel registered for use with that permit at any time that the vessel has sablefish on board the vessel that count toward that permit's cumulative sablefish landing limit. This person must carry government issued photo identification while aboard the vessel. A permit owner is not obligated to be on board the vessel registered for use with the sablefish-endorsed limited entry permit during the primary sablefish season if:

(i) The person, partnership or corporation had ownership interest in a limited entry permit with a sablefish endorsement prior to November 1, 2000. A person who has ownership interest in a partnership or corporation that owned a sablefish-endorsed permit as of November 1, 2000, but who did not individually own a sablefish-endorsed limited entry permit as of November 1, 2000, is not exempt from the owner-on-board requirement when he/she leaves the partnership or corporation and purchases another permit individually. A person, partnership, or corporation that is exempt from the owner-on-board requirement may sell all of their permits, buy another sablefish-endorsed permit within up to a year from the date the last permit was approved for transfer, and retain their exemption from the owner-on-board requirements. Additionally, a person, partnership, or corporation that qualified for the owner-on-board exemption, but later divested their interest in a permit or permits, may retain rights to an owner-on-board exemption as long as that person, partnership, or corporation purchases another permit by March 2, 2007. A person, partnership or corporation could only purchase a permit if it has not added or changed individuals since November 1, 2000, excluding individuals that have left the partnership or corporation, or that have died.

(ii) The person who owns or who has ownership interest in a sablefish-endorsed limited entry permit is prevented from being on board a fishing vessel because the person died, is ill, or is injured. The person requesting the exemption must send a letter to NMFS requesting an exemption from the owner-on-board requirements, with appropriate evidence as described at § 660.372(b)(4)(ii)(A) or (B). All emergency exemptions for death, injury, or illness will be evaluated by NMFS and a decision will be made in writing to the permit owner within 60 calendar days of receipt of the original exemption request.

(A) Evidence of death of the permit owner shall be provided to NMFS in the form of a copy of a death certificate. In

the interim before the estate is settled, if the deceased permit owner was subject to the owner-on-board requirements, the estate of the deceased permit owner may send a letter to NMFS with a copy of the death certificate, requesting an exemption from the owner-on-board requirements. An exemption due to death of the permit owner will be effective only until such time that the estate of the deceased permit owner has transferred the deceased permit owner's permit to a beneficiary or up to three years after the date of death as proven by a death certificate, whichever is earlier. An exemption from the owner-on-board requirements will be conveyed in a letter from NMFS to the estate of the permit owner and is required to be on the vessel during fishing operations.

(B) Evidence of illness or injury that prevents the permit owner from participating in the fishery shall be provided to NMFS in the form of a letter from a certified medical practitioner. This letter must detail the relevant medical conditions of the permit owner and how those conditions prevent the permit owner from being onboard a fishing vessel during the primary season. An exemption due to injury or illness will be effective only for the calendar year of the request for exemption, and will not be granted for more than three consecutive or total years. NMFS will consider any exemption granted for less than 12 months in a year to count as one year against the 3-year cap. In order to extend an emergency medical exemption for a succeeding year, the permit owner must submit a new request and provide documentation from a certified medical practitioner detailing why the permit owner is still unable to be onboard a fishing vessel. An emergency exemption will be conveyed in a letter from NMFS to the permit owner and is required to be on the vessel during fishing operations.

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

[Docket No. 041126333-5040-02; I.D. 022406B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Shallow-Water Species Fishery by Vessels Using Trawl Gear in 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 shallow-water species by vessels using trawl gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to allow the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA to resume.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 27, 2006, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2006.

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.

NMFS closed the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the GOA under § 679.21(d)(7)(i) on February 23, 2006.

NMFS has determined that, approximately 124 mt remain in the first seasonal apportionment of the 2006 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(i)(C) and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to allow the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA to resume, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is reopening directed fishing for shallow-water species by vessels using trawl gear in the GOA. The species and species groups that comprise the shallow-water species fishery are pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates and “other species.”

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 the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in 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 23, 2006.

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 § 679.25 and § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: February 27, 2006.

James P. Burgess,

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

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