

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

[Docket No. 070213032-7032-01]

RIN 0648-XA83

Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Deep-water Species Fishery by Catcher Vessels 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 species that comprise the deep-water species fishery for catcher vessels subject to sideboard limits established under the Central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Rockfish Program in the GOA. This action is necessary because the 2007 Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) sideboard limit specified for the deep-water species fishery for catcher vessels subject to sideboard limits established under the Central GOA Rockfish Program in the GOA is insufficient to support directed fishing for the deep-water species fisheries.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 1, 2007, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., July 31, 2007.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Hogan, 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 2007 Pacific halibut PSC sideboard limit specified for the deep-water species fishery for catcher vessels subject to sideboard limits established under the Central GOA Rockfish Program in the GOA is 22 metric tons as established by the 2007 and 2008 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (72 FR 9676, March 5, 2007; as corrected by 72 FR 13217, March 21, 2007), for the period 1200 hrs, A.l.t., July 1, 2007, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., July 31, 2007.

In accordance with § 679.82(d)(9)(i)(B), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the 2007 Pacific halibut PSC sideboard limit specified for the deep-water species fishery for catcher vessels subject to sideboard limits established under the Central GOA Rockfish Program in the GOA is insufficient to support directed fishing for the deep-water species fisheries. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for species that comprise the deep-water species fishery for catcher vessels subject to sideboard limits established under the Central GOA Rockfish Program in the GOA. Section 679.82(d)(4)(iii) lists the species and species groups that comprise the deep-water species fishery as deep-water flatfish, rex sole, and arrowtooth flounder.

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 closure of the deep-water species fishery for catcher vessels subject to sideboard limits established under the Central GOA Rockfish Program 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 June 11, 2007.

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 § 679.82 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: June 13, 2007.

James P. Burgess,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
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