or eighth year service milestone as set forth in § 54.320(d)(3):

(i) Sixth year service milestone. Support will be recovered as follows after the sixth year service milestone grace period or if USAC later determines in the course of a compliance review that a support recipient does not have sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it was offering service to all of the locations required by the sixth year service milestone:

(A) If an ETC has deployed to 95 percent or more of the Connect America Cost Model location count or the adjusted Connect America Cost Model location count if there are fewer locations, but less than 100 percent, USAC will recover an amount of support that is equal to 1.25 times the average amount of support per location received in the state for that ETC over the support term for the relevant number of locations;

(B) If an ETC has deployed to 90 percent or more of the Connect America Cost Model location count or the adjusted Connect America Cost Model location count if there are fewer locations, but less than 95 percent, USAC will recover an amount of support that is equal to 1.5 times the average amount of support per location received in the state for that ETC over the support term for the relevant number of locations, plus 5 percent of the support recipient's total Rural Digital Opportunity Fund support authorized over the 10-year support term for that state;

(C) If an ETC has deployed to fewer than 90 percent of the Connect America Cost Model location count or the adjusted Connect America Cost Model location count if there are fewer locations, USAC will recover an amount of support that is equal to 1.75 times the average amount of support per location received in the state for that ETC over the support term for the relevant number of locations, plus 10 percent of the support recipient's total Rural Digital Opportunity Fund support authorized over the 10-year support term for that state.

(ii) Eighth year service milestone. If a Rural Digital Opportunity Fund support recipient is required to serve more new locations than determined by the Connect America Cost Model, support will be recovered as follows after the eighth year service milestone grace period or if USAC later determines in the course of a compliance review that a support recipient does not have sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it was offering service to all of the locations required by the eighth year service milestone:

(A) If an ETC has deployed to 95 percent or more of its new location count, but less than 100 percent, USAC will recover an amount of support that is equal to the average amount of support per location received in the state for that ETC over the support term for the relevant number of locations;

(B) If an ETC has deployed to 90 percent or more of its new location count, but less than 95 percent, USAC will recover an amount of support that is equal to 1.25 times the average amount of support per location received in the state for that ETC over the support term for the relevant number of locations;

(C) If an ETC has deployed to 85 percent or more of its new location count, but less than 90 percent, USAC will recover an amount of support that is equal to 1.5 times the average amount of support per location received in the state for that ETC over the support term for the relevant number of locations, plus 5 percent of the support recipient's total Rural Digital Opportunity Fund support authorized over the 10-year support term for that state;

(D) If an ETC has deployed to less than 85 percent of its new location count, USAC will recover an amount of support that is equal to 1.75 times the average amount of support per location received in the state for that ETC over the support term for the relevant number of locations, plus 10 percent of the support recipient's total Rural Digital Opportunity Fund support authorized over the 10-year support term for that state.

(2) Any support recipient that believes it cannot meet the third-year service milestone must notify the Wireline Competition Bureau within 10 business days of the third-year service milestone deadline and provide information explaining this expected deficiency. If a support recipient has not made such a notification by March 1 following the third-year service milestone, and has deployed to fewer than 20 percent of the required number of locations by the end of the third year, the recipient will immediately be in default and subject to support recovery. The Tier 4 status six-month grace period as set forth in § 54.320(d)(iv) will not be applicable.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 200221–0062]

RIN 0648–XY201

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Gulf of Alaska; Final 2020 and 2021 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule; harvest specifications and closures.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications, apportionments, and Pacific halibut prohibited species catch limits for the groundfish fishery of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for groundfish during the remainder of the 2020 and the start of the 2021 fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska. The 2020 harvest specifications supersede those previously set in the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications, and the 2021 harvest specifications will be superseded in early 2021 when the final 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications are published. The intended effect of this action is to conserve and manage the groundfish resources in the GOA in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

DATES: Harvest specifications and closures are effective at 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 10, 2020, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2021.

ADDRESSES: Electronic copies of the Final Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Record of Decision (ROD), the annual Supplementary Information Reports (SIRs) to the EIS, and the Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) prepared for this action are available from *https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov.* The 2019 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report for the groundfish resources of the GOA, dated November 2019, and SAFE reports for previous years are available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at 1007 West 3rd Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK

99501, phone 907–271–2809, or from the Council's website at *https://www.npfmc.org.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Obren Davis, 907–586–7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the GOA groundfish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone of the GOA under the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP). The Council prepared the FMP under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.* Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the FMP appear at 50 CFR parts 600, 679, and 680.

The FMP and its implementing regulations require that NMFS, after consultation with the Council, specify the total allowable catch (TAC) for each target species, the sum of which must be within the optimum yield (OY) range of 116,000 to 800,000 metric tons (mt) (50 CFR 679.20(a)(1)(i)(B)). Section 679.20(c)(1) further requires that NMFS publish and solicit public comment on proposed annual TACs and apportionments thereof, Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, and seasonal allowances of pollock and Pacific cod. Upon consideration of public comment received under § 679.20(c)(1), NMFS must publish notice of final harvest specifications for up to two fishing years as annual TACs and apportionments, Pacific halibut PSC limits, and seasonal allowances of pollock and Pacific cod, per § 679.20(c)(3)(ii). The final harvest specifications set forth in Tables 1 through 29 of this rule reflect the outcome of this process, as required at § 679.20(c).

The proposed 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA and Pacific halibut PSC limits were published in the **Federal Register** on December 3, 2019 (84 FR 66109). Comments were invited and accepted through January 2, 2020. NMFS received two letters of comment on the proposed harvest specifications; the comments are summarized and responded to in the ''Comments and Responses'' section of this rule. No changes were made to the final rule in response to the letters of comment received. In December 2019, NMFS consulted with the Council regarding the 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications. After considering public comment, as well as biological and socioeconomic data that were available at the Council's December 2019 meeting, NMFS is implementing the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications, as recommended by the Council. For 2020, the sum of the TAC amounts is 399,239 mt. For 2021, the sum of the TAC amounts is 407,982 mt.

Other Actions Affecting the 2020 and 2021 Harvest Specifications

Reclassify Sculpins as an Ecosystem Component Species

In October 2019, the Council recommended that sculpins be reclassified in the FMP as an ''ecosystem component'' species, which is a category of non-target species that are not in need of conservation and management. Currently, NMFS annually sets an overfishing level (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), and TAC for sculpins in the GOA groundfish harvest specifications. Under the Council's recommended action, OFL, ABC, and TAC specifications for sculpins would no longer be required. NMFS intends to develop rulemaking to implement the Council's recommendation for sculpins. Such rulemaking would prohibit directed fishing for sculpins, maintain recordkeeping and reporting, and establish a sculpin maximum retainable amount when directed fishing for groundfish species at 20 percent to discourage retention, while allowing flexibility to prosecute groundfish fisheries. Further details (and public comment on the sculpin action) will be available on publication of the proposed rule to reclassify sculpins as an ecosystem component species of the FMP. If the FMP amendment and its implementing regulations are approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the action is anticipated to be effective in 2021. Until effective, NMFS will continue to publish OFLs, ABCs, and TACs for sculpins in the GOA groundfish harvest specifications.

Final Rulemaking To Prohibit Directed Fishing for American Fisheries Act (AFA) and Crab Rationalization (CR) Program Sideboard Limits

On February 8, 2019, NMFS published a final rule (84 FR 2723) that modified regulations for the AFA Program and CR Program participants subject to limits on the catch of specific species (sideboard limits) in the GOA. Sideboard limits are intended to prevent participants who benefit from receiving exclusive harvesting privileges in a particular fishery from shifting effort to other fisheries. Specifically, the final rule established regulations to prohibit directed fishing for most groundfish species or species groups subject to sideboard limits under the AFA Program and CR Program, rather than prohibiting directed fishing through the annual GOA harvest specifications. Since the final rule is now effective, NMFS is no longer publishing in the annual GOA harvest specifications the AFA Program and CR Program sideboard limit amounts for groundfish species or species groups subject to the final rule. Those groundfish species subject to the final rule associated with sideboard limits are now prohibited to directed fishing in regulation (§§ 679.20(d)(1)(iv)(D) and 680.22(e)(1)(i) and (iii) and Tables 54, 55, and 56 to 50 CFR part 679). NMFS is publishing in the annual GOA harvest specifications the AFA Program and CR Program sideboard limit amounts for groundfish species or species groups that were not subject to the final rule (see Tables 18, 19, 21 and 22 of this action).

Proposed Revisions to the GOA Pollock Seasons and Pacific Cod Seasonal Allocations

In June 2019, the Council recommended for Secretarial review Amendment 109 to the FMP. Amendment 109 would revise pollock seasons and Pacific cod seasonal allocations. Amendment 109 would modify the existing annual pollock TAC allocation to two equal seasonal allocations (50 percent of TAC), rather than four equal seasonal allocations (25 percent of TAC). The pollock A and B seasons would be combined into a January 20 through May 31 A season, and the pollock C and D seasons would be combined into a September 1 through November 1 B season. Additionally, Amendment 109 would revise the Pacific cod TAC seasonal apportionments to the trawl catcher vessel (CV) sector by increasing the A season allocation and decreasing the B season allocation. Further details (and public comment on Amendment 109) will be available on publication of the proposed rule to implement Amendment 109. If Amendment 109 and its implementing regulations are approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the action is anticipated to be effective in 2021.

ABC and TAC Specifications

In December 2019, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), its Advisory Panel (AP), and the Council reviewed the most recent biological and harvest information about the condition of the GOA groundfish stocks. The Council's GOA Groundfish Plan Team (Plan Team) compiled and presented this information in the 2019 SAFE report for the GOA groundfish fisheries, dated November 2019 (see

ADDRESSES). The SAFE report contains a review of the latest scientific analyses and estimates of each species' biomass and other biological parameters, as well as summaries of the available information on the GOA ecosystem and the economic condition of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska. From these data and analyses, the Plan Team recommends, and the SSC sets, an OFL and ABC for each species or species group. The 2019 SAFE report was made available for public review during the public comment period for the proposed harvest specifications.

In previous years, the greatest changes from the proposed to the final harvest specifications have been based on recent NMFS stock surveys, which provide updated estimates of stock biomass and spatial distribution, and changes to the models used for producing stock assessments. At the November 2019 Plan Team meeting, NMFS scientists presented updated and new survey results, changes to stock assessment models, and accompanying stock assessment estimates for groundfish species and species groups that are included in the 2019 SAFE report per the stock assessment schedule found in the 2019 SAFE report introduction. The SSC reviewed this information at the December 2019 Council meeting. Changes from the proposed to the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications are discussed below.

The final 2020 and 2021 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are based on the best available biological and socioeconomic information, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised methods used to calculate stock biomass. The FMP specifies the formulas, or tiers, to be used to compute OFLs and ABCs. The formulas applicable to a particular stock or stock complex are determined by the level of reliable information available to fisheries scientists. This information is categorized into a successive series of six tiers to define OFL and ABC amounts, with Tier 1 representing the highest level of information quality available and Tier 6 representing the lowest level of information quality available. The Plan Team used the FMP tier structure to calculate OFL and ABC amounts for each groundfish species. The SSC adopted the final 2020 and 2021 OFLs and ABCs recommended by the Plan Team for most groundfish species, with the exception of sablefish and Pacific cod.

For sablefish, as discussed in the proposed 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications (84 FR 66109, December 3, 2019) the SSC considered the appropriateness of continuing to specify sablefish OFLs at the separate Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and GOA management area levels. The SSC reviewed the information available regarding area apportionment of the OFL, and decided that the best scientific information available regarding stock structure for sablefish supports an Alaska-wide OFL specification. Therefore, based on biological considerations, the SSC recommended specification of a single Alaska-wide sablefish OFL, which includes the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and the GOA. Also, the SSC agreed with the Plan Team that a substantial reduction in the 2020 and 2021 ABCs from the maximum permissible ABCs were warranted. However, the SSC revised the Plan Team's recommendation for the sablefish ABCs by revising the method and amount of the reduction of the sablefish ABCs from the maximum permissible ABCs.

For Pacific cod, the SSC accepted the Plan Team's recommendation for the 2020 Pacific cod ABC, but also decreased the 2021 ABC to equal the lower 2020 ABC. There is considerable uncertainty about future Pacific cod recruitment and potential effects of the recent marine heat wave on Pacific cod mortality. The 2020 Pacific cod assessment should provide more clarity about future trends.

The Council adopted the SSC's OFLs and ABCs and the AP's TAC recommendations, with the exception of Pacific cod TACs (further described below). The final TAC recommendations are based on the ABCs as adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations, including maintaining the sum of all TACs within the required OY range of 116,000 to 800,000 mt.

The Council recommended 2020 and 2021 TACs that are equal to ABCs for pollock in the Southeast Outside (SEO) District, shallow-water flatfish in the Central GOA and the West Yakutat and SEO Districts, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, arrowtooth flounder in the Central GOA, flathead sole in the West Yakutat and SEO Districts, Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, shortraker rockfish, dusky rockfish, rougheye and blackspotted rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, thornyhead rockfish, ''other rockfish,'' big skate, longnose skate, other skates, sculpins, sharks, and octopuses in the GOA. The Council recommended TACs for 2020 and 2021 that are less than the ABCs for pollock in the Western and Central GOA and the West Yakutat District, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish in the Western GOA, arrowtooth flounder in the Western GOA and the West Yakutat and SEO Districts, flathead sole in the Western and Central GOA, and Atka mackerel. The Council recommended 2020 sablefish TACs that are less than the 2020 ABCs, and 2021 sablefish TACs that are equal to 2021 ABCs. Setting the 2020 sablefish TACs less than 2020 ABCs is intended to provide an incremental increase to the 2020 sablefish TACs, rather than the very large increase in the 2020 sablefish TACs if they were set equal to ABCs.

The combined Western, Central, and West Yakutat pollock TAC and the GOA Pacific cod TACs are set to accommodate the State of Alaska's (State's) guideline harvest levels (GHLs) so that the ABCs for pollock and Pacific cod are not exceeded. Additionally, the Council recommended a further decrease to the Pacific cod TACs as an additional conservation measure due to this stock's low spawning biomass level (further discussed in the section titled ''Specification and Apportionment of TAC Amounts''). The Western GOA shallow-water flatfish, Western GOA arrowtooth flounder, and Western GOA flathead sole TACs are set to allow for increased harvest opportunities for these target species while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other, more fully utilized fisheries. Similarly, the Western Yakutat and SEO Districts arrowtooth flounder TACs and the Central GOA flathead sole TACs are set lower than ABC to conserve halibut PSC limit for use in other fisheries or because there is limited commercial interest and participation in these fisheries. The Atka mackerel TAC is set to accommodate incidental catch amounts in other fisheries.

The final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications approved by the Secretary of Commerce are unchanged from those recommended by the Council, and are consistent with the preferred harvest strategy alternative in the EIS (see **ADDRESSES**).

NMFS finds that the Council's recommended OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of the groundfish stocks as described in the final 2019 SAFE report. NMFS also finds that the Council's recommendations for OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations, including maintaining the total TAC within the OY range. NMFS reviewed the Council's recommended TACs and apportionments, and NMFS approves these harvest specifications under 50 CFR 679.20(c)(3)(ii). The apportionment of TAC amounts among gear types and

sectors, processing sectors, and seasons is discussed below.

Tables 1 and 2 list the final 2020 and 2021 OFLs, ABCs, TACs, and area apportionments of groundfish in the GOA. The 2020 harvest specifications set in this final action will supersede the 2020 harvest specifications previously set in the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019). The 2021 harvest specifications will be superseded in early 2021 when the final 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications are published. Pursuant to this final action, the 2020 harvest specifications therefore will apply for the remainder of the current year (2020), while the 2021 harvest specifications are projected only for the following year (2021) and will be superseded in early 2021 by the final 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications. Because this final action (published in early 2020) will be superseded in early 2021 by the publication of the final 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications, it is projected that this final action will implement the harvest specifications for the Gulf of Alaska for approximately one year.

Specification and Apportionment of TAC Amounts

NMFS's apportionment of groundfish species is based on the distribution of biomass among the regulatory areas over which NMFS manages the species. Additional regulations govern the apportionment of pollock, Pacific cod, and sablefish and are described below.

The ABC for the pollock stock in the combined Western and Central Regulatory Areas and the West Yakutat (WYK) District of the Eastern Regulatory Area (the W/C/WYK) includes the amount for the GHL established by the State for the Prince William Sound (PWS) pollock fishery. The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council have recommended that the sum of all State water and Federal water pollock removals from the GOA not exceed ABC recommendations. For 2020 and 2021, the SSC recommended and the Council approved the W/C/WYK pollock ABC, including the amount to account for the State's PWS GHL. At the November 2019 Plan Team meeting, State fisheries managers recommended setting the PWS pollock GHL at 2.5 percent of the annual W/C/WYK pollock ABC. For 2020, this yields a PWS pollock GHL of 2,712 mt, a decrease of 684 mt from the 2019 PWS pollock GHL of 3,396 mt. For 2021, the PWS pollock GHL is 2,797 mt, a decrease of 599 mt from the 2019 PWS pollock GHL of 3,396 mt. After the GHL reductions, the 2020 and 2021 pollock ABCs for the combined W/C/WYK areas are then apportioned between four statistical areas (Areas 610, 620, 630, and 640) as both ABCs and TACs, as described below and detailed in Tables 1 and 2. The total ABCs and TACs for the four statistical areas, plus the State PWS GHL, do not exceed the combined W/C/WYK ABC.

Apportionments of pollock to the W/C/WYK areas are considered to be ''apportionments of annual catch limits (ACLs)'' rather than ''ABCs.'' This more accurately reflects that such apportionments address management, rather than biological or conservation, concerns. In addition, apportionments of the ACL in this manner allow NMFS to balance any transfer of TAC among Areas 610, 620, and 630 pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B) to ensure that the combined W/C/WYK ACL, ABC, and TAC are not exceeded.

NMFS establishes pollock TACs in the Western (Area 610) and Central (Areas 620 and 630) Regulatory Areas and the West Yakutat (Area 640) and the SEO (Area 650) Districts of the GOA (see Tables 1 and 2). NMFS also establishes seasonal apportionments of the annual pollock TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA among Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630. These apportionments are divided equally among each of the following four seasons: The A season (January 20 through March 10), the B season (March 10 through May 31), the C season (August 25 through October 1), and the D season (October 1 through November 1) (§§ 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), and 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(A) and (B)). Additional detail is provided in this rule; Tables 3 and 4 list these amounts.

The 2020 and 2021 Pacific cod TACs are set to accommodate the State's GHL for Pacific cod in State waters in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, as well as in PWS. The Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council recommended that the sum of all State water and Federal water Pacific cod removals from the GOA not exceed ABC recommendations. The Council set the 2020 and 2021 Pacific cod TACs in the Western, Central, and Eastern Regulatory Areas to account for State GHLs. Therefore, the 2020 and 2021 Pacific cod TACs are less than the ABCs by the following amounts: (1) Western GOA, 2,866 mt; (2) Central GOA, 4,652 mt; and (3) Eastern GOA, 672 mt. These amounts reflect the State's 2020 and 2021 GHLs in these areas, which are 30 percent of the Western GOA ABC and 25 percent of the Eastern and Central GOA ABCs. For 2020, this results in a Western GOA Pacific cod GHL of 1,483 mt. This also results in a 2,115 mt GHL and 305 mt GHL in the Central GOA and Eastern GOA, respectively. The 2020 and 2021 Pacific cod TACs also incorporate an additional reduction from the Pacific cod ABCs, as the Council and NMFS have set the Pacific cod TACs at a conservative level of 60 percent of the available ABCs, after deduction of the State GHL amounts. The Council chose, and NMFS agrees, to make this additional reduction to the Pacific cod TAC because the most recent biological assessment available of the stock condition for Pacific cod in the GOA has determined that the spawning biomass will be below 20 percent of the projected unfished spawning biomass during 2020.

NMFS establishes seasonal apportionments of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas. Sixty percent of the annual TAC is apportioned to the A season for hook-and-line, pot, and jig gear from January 1 through June 10, and for trawl gear from January 20 through June 10. Forty percent of the annual TAC is apportioned to the B season for jig gear from June 10 through December 31, for hook-and-line and pot gear from September 1 through December 31, and for trawl gear from September 1 through November 1 (§§ 679.23(d)(3) and 679.20(a)(12)). The Western and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs are allocated among various gear and operational sectors. The Pacific cod sector apportionments are discussed in detail in a subsequent section and in Tables 5 and 6 of this rule.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(4), NMFS has determined that a biological assessment of stock condition for Pacific cod in the GOA projects that the spawning biomass in the GOA will be below 20 percent of the projected unfished spawning biomass during 2020. Consequently, NMFS prohibited directed fishing for Pacific cod in the GOA on January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020 (84 FR 70438, December 23, 2019). While this closure is effective the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip. Pursuant to § 679.20(d)(4), the directed fishery for Pacific cod in the GOA will remain closed until a subsequent biological assessment projects that the spawning biomass for Pacific cod in the GOA will exceed 20 percent of the projected unfished spawning biomass during a fishing year.

The Council's recommendation for sablefish area apportionments takes into account the prohibition on the use of trawl gear in the SEO District of the Eastern Regulatory Area (§ 679.7(b)(1)) and makes available 5 percent of the combined Eastern Regulatory Area

TACs to vessels using trawl gear for use as incidental catch in other trawl groundfish fisheries in the WYK District (§ 679.20(a)(4)(i)). Tables 7 and 8 list the final 2020 and 2021 allocations of sablefish TAC to fixed gear and trawl gear in the GOA.

Changes From the Proposed 2020 and 2021 Harvest Specifications in the GOA

In October 2019, the Council's recommendations for the proposed 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications (84 FR 66109, December 3, 2019) were based largely on information contained in the final 2018 SAFE report for the GOA groundfish fisheries, dated November 2018. The final 2018 SAFE report for the GOA is available from the Council (see **ADDRESSES**). The Council proposed that the final OFLs, ABCs, and TACs established for the 2020 groundfish fisheries (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019) be used for the proposed 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications (84 FR 66109, December 3, 2019), pending completion and review of the 2019 SAFE report at the Council's December 2019 meeting.

As described previously, the SSC recommended the final 2020 and 2021 OFLs and ABCs as recommended by the Plan Team. The Council adopted as its recommendations the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations and the AP's TAC recommendations (except for Pacific cod) for 2020 and 2021.

The final 2020 ABCs are higher than the proposed 2020 ABCs published in the proposed 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications (84 FR 66109, December 3, 2019) for pollock, sablefish, rex sole, Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, dusky rockfish, big skate, and octopuses. The final 2020 ABCs are lower than the proposed 2020 ABCs for Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, deep-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, shortraker rockfish, rougheye/blackspotted rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, other rockfish, longnose skate, other skates, and sculpins.

The final 2021 ABCs are higher than the proposed 2021 ABCs for pollock, sablefish, shallow-water flatfish, rex sole, flathead sole, Pacific ocean perch, big skate, and octopuses. The final 2021 ABCs are lower than the proposed 2021 ABCs for Pacific cod, deep-water flatfish, arrowtooth flounder, northern rockfish, shortraker rockfish, dusky rockfish, rougheye/blackspotted rockfish, demersal shelf rockfish, other rockfish, longnose skates, other skates, and sculpins. For the remaining target species, the Council recommended the final 2020 and 2021 ABCs that are the same as the proposed 2020 and 2021 ABCs.

Additional information explaining the changes between the proposed and final ABCs is included in the final 2019 SAFE report, which was not available when the Council made its proposed ABC and TAC recommendations in October 2019. At that time, the most recent stock assessment information was contained in the final 2018 SAFE report. The final 2019 SAFE report contains the best and most recent scientific information on the condition of the groundfish stocks, as previously discussed in this preamble, and is available for review (see **ADDRESSES**). The Council considered the 2019 SAFE report in December 2019 when it made recommendations for the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications. In the GOA, the total final 2020 TAC amount is 399,239 mt, a decrease of 2 percent from the total proposed 2020 TAC amount of 408,534 mt. The total final 2021 TAC amount is 407,982 mt, a decrease of 0.1 percent from the total proposed 2021 TAC amount of 408,534 mt. Table 1a summarizes the difference between the proposed and final TACs.

Annual stock assessments incorporate a variety of new or revised inputs, such as survey data or catch information, as well as changes to the statistical models used to estimate a species' biomass and population trend. Changes to biomass and ABC estimates are primarily based on fishery catch updates to species' assessment models. Some species, such as pollock and sablefish, have additional surveys conducted on an annual basis, which resulted in additional data being available for the 2019 assessments for these stocks.

The changes from the proposed 2020 TACs to the final 2020 TACs are within a range of plus 13 percent or minus 59 percent, and the changes from the proposed 2021 TACs to the final 2021 TACs are within a range of plus 44 percent or minus 59 percent. Based on changes in the estimates of overall biomass in the stock assessment for 2020 and 2021, as compared to the estimates previously made for 2019 and 2020, the species or species group with the greatest TAC percentage increases are sablefish (in 2021), Pacific ocean perch, and big skate. Based on changes in the estimates of biomass, the species or species group with the greatest decreases in TACs are Pacific cod, deep-water flatfish, shortraker rockfish, rougheye/blackspotted rockfish, other rockfish, longnose skates, and other skates. For all other species and species groups, changes from the proposed 2020 TACs to the final 2020 TACs and changes from the proposed 2021 TACs to the final 2021 TACs are less than a 10 percent change (either increase or decrease). These TAC changes correspond to associated changes in the ABCs and TACs, as recommended by the SSC, AP, and Council.

Detailed information providing the basis for the changes described above is contained in the final 2019 SAFE report. The final TACs are based on the best scientific information available, including biological and socioeconomic information. These TACs are specified in compliance with the harvest strategy described in the proposed and final rules for the 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications.

TABLE 1A—COMPARISON OF PROPOSED AND FINAL 2020 AND 2021 GOA TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH LIMITS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentage]

Species	2020 and 2021 proposed TAC	2020 final TAC	2020 final minus 2020 proposed TAC	Percentage difference	2021 final TAC	2021 final minus 2021 proposed TAC	Percentage difference
Pollock	114,943	115,930	987	1	119,239	4,296	4
Pacific cod	15,709	6,431	−9,278	−59	6,431	−9,278	−59
Sablefish	15,462	14,393	−1,069	−7	22,252	6,790	44
Shallow-water flatfish	43,606	44,864	1,258	3	45,403	1,797	4
Deep-water flatfish	9,624	6,030	−3,594	−37	5,926	−3,698	−38
Rex sole	14,725	14,878	153	1	15,416	691	5
Arrowtooth flounder	96,875	96,969	94	0	94,983	−1,892	−2
Flathead sole	26,587	28,262	1,675	6	28,386	1,799	7
Pacific ocean perch	27,652	31,238	3,586	13	29,983	2,331	8
Northern rockfish	4,269	4,311	42	1	4,106	−163	−4
Shortraker rockfish	863	708	−155	−18	708	−155	−18
Dusky rockfish	3,670	3,676	6	0	3,598	−72	−2

TABLE 1A—COMPARISON OF PROPOSED AND FINAL 2020 AND 2021 GOA TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH LIMITS—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentage]

Species	2020 and 2021 proposed TAC	2020 final TAC	2020 final minus 2020 proposed TAC	Percentage difference	2021 final TAC	2021 final minus 2021 proposed TAC	Percentage difference
Rougheye/blackspotted rockfish	1,414	1,209	−205	−14	1,211	−203	−14
Demersal shelf rockfish	261	238	−23	−9	238	−23	−9
Thornyhead rockfish	2,016	2,016	0	0	2,016	0	0
Other rockfish	5,594	4,053	−1,541	−28	4,053	−1,541	−28
Atka mackerel	3,000	3,000	0	0	3,000	0	0
Big skate	2,848	3,208	360	13	3,208	360	13
Longnose skate	3,572	2,587	−985	−28	2,587	−985	−28
Other skates	1,384	875	−509	−37	875	−509	−37
Sculpins	5,301	5,199	−102	−2	5,199	−102	−2
Sharks	8,184	8,184	0	0	8,184	0	0
Octopuses	975	980	5	1	980	5	1
Total	408,534	399,239	−9,295	−2	407,982	−552	−0.1

The final 2020 and 2021 TAC amounts for the GOA are within the OY range established for the GOA and do not exceed the ABC for any species or species group. Tables 1 and 2 list the final OFL, ABC, and TAC amounts for GOA groundfish for 2020 and 2021, respectively.

TABLE 1—FINAL 2020 OFLS, ABCS, AND TACS OF GROUNDFISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/WEST YAKUTAT, WESTERN, CENTRAL, EASTERN REGULATORY AREAS, THE WEST YAKUTAT AND SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE DISTRICTS OF THE EASTERN REGULATORY AREA, AND GULFWIDE DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Area [1]	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock [2]	Shumagin (610)	n/a	19,175	19,175
	Chirikof (620)	n/a	54,456	54,456
	Kodiak (630)	n/a	26,597	26,597
	WYK (640)	n/a	5,554	5,554
	W/C/WYK (subtotal) [2]	140,674	108,494	105,782
	SEO (650)	13,531	10,148	10,148
	Total	154,205	118,642	115,930
Pacific cod [3]	W	n/a	4,942	2,076
	C	n/a	8,458	3,806
	E	n/a	1,221	549
	Total	17,794	14,621	6,431
Sablefish [4]	W	n/a	2,278	1,942
	C	n/a	7,560	6,445
	WYK	n/a	2,521	2,343
	SEO	n/a	4,524	3,663
	E (WYK and SEO) (subtotal)	n/a	7,045	6,006
	Total	50,481	16,883	14,393
Shallow-water flatfish [5]	W	n/a	23,849	13,250
	C	n/a	27,732	27,732
	WYK	n/a	2,773	2,773
	SEO	n/a	1,109	1,109
	Total	68,010	55,463	44,864
Deep-water flatfish [6]	W	n/a	226	226
	C	n/a	1,948	1,948
	WYK	n/a	2,105	2,105
	SEO	n/a	1,751	1,751
	Total	7,163	6,030	6,030
Rex sole	W	n/a	2,901	2,901
	C	n/a	8,579	8,579
	WYK	n/a	1,174	1,174
	SEO	n/a	2,224	2,224
	Total	18,127	14,878	14,878
Arrowtooth flounder	W	n/a	31,455	14,500
	C	n/a	68,669	68,669
	WYK	n/a	10,242	6,900
	SEO	.....	17,694	6,900

TABLE 1—FINAL 2020 OFLS, ABCS, AND TACS OF GROUNDFISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/WEST YAKUTAT, WESTERN, CENTRAL, EASTERN REGULATORY AREAS, THE WEST YAKUTAT AND SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE DISTRICTS OF THE EASTERN REGULATORY AREA, AND GULFWIDE DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Area [1]	OFL	ABC	TAC
	Total	153,017	128,060	96,969
Flathead sole	W	n/a	13,783	8,650
	C	n/a	20,201	15,400
	WYK	n/a	2,354	2,354
	SEO	n/a	1,858	1,858
	Total	46,572	38,196	28,262
Pacific ocean perch [7]	W	n/a	1,437	1,437
	C	n/a	23,678	23,678
	WYK	n/a	1,470	1,470
	W/C/WYK subtotal	31,567	26,585	26,585
	SEO	5,525	4,653	4,653
	Total	37,092	31,238	31,238
Northern rockfish [8]	W	n/a	1,133	1,133
	C	n/a	3,178	3,178
	E	n/a	1	.....
	Total	5,143	4,312	4,311
Shortraker rockfish [9]	W	n/a	52	52
	C	n/a	284	284
	E	n/a	372	372
	Total	944	708	708
Dusky rockfish [10]	W	n/a	776	776
	C	n/a	2,746	2,746
	WYK	n/a	115	115
	SEO	n/a	39	39
	Total	4,492	3,676	3,676
Rougheye and Blackspotted rockfish [11]	W	n/a	168	168
	C	n/a	455	455
	E	n/a	586	586
	Total	1,452	1,209	1,209
Demersal shelf rockfish [12]	SEO	375	238	238
Thornyhead rockfish	W	n/a	326	326
	C	n/a	911	911
	E	n/a	779	779
	Total	2,688	2,016	2,016
Other rockfish [13 14]	W and C	n/a	940	940
	WYK	n/a	369	369
	SEO	n/a	2,744	2,744
	Total	5,320	4,053	4,053
Atka mackerel	GW	6,200	4,700	3,000
Big skate [15]	W	n/a	758	758
	C	n/a	1,560	1,560
	E	n/a	890	890
	Total	4,278	3,208	3,208
Longnose skate [16]	W	n/a	158	158
	C	n/a	1,875	1,875
	E	n/a	554	554
	Total	3,449	2,587	2,587
Other skates [17]	GW	1,166	875	875
Sculpins	GW	6,932	5,199	5,199
Sharks	GW	10,913	8,184	8,184
Octopus	GW	1,307	980	980
Total		607,120	465,956	399,239

[1] Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2. (W = Western Gulf of Alaska; C = Central Gulf of Alaska; E = Eastern Gulf of Alaska; WYK = West Yakutat District; SEO = Southeast Outside District; GW = Gulf-wide).

[2] The total for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas pollock ABC is 108,494 mt. After deducting 2.5 percent (2,712 mt) of that ABC for the State's pollock GHL fishery, the remaining pollock ABC of 105,782 mt (for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas) is apportioned among four statistical areas (Areas 610, 620, 630, and 640). These apportionments are considered subarea ACLs, rather than ABCs, for specification and reapportionment purposes. The ACLs in Areas 610, 620, and 630 are further divided by season, as detailed in Table 3 (final 2020 seasonal biomass distribution of pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, area apportionments, and seasonal allowances). In the West Yakutat (Area 640) and Southeast Outside (Area 650) Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.

[3] The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned 60 percent to the A season and 40 percent to the B season in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA. Pacific cod TAC in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA is allocated 90 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component and 10 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component. Table 5 lists the final 2020 Pacific cod seasonal apportionments and sector allocations.

[4] The sablefish OFL is set Alaska-wide. Additionally, sablefish is allocated to trawl and fixed gear in 2020 and trawl gear in 2021. Table 7 lists the final 2020 allocations of sablefish TACs.

[5] ''Shallow-water flatfish'' means flatfish not including ''deep-water flatfish,'' flathead sole, rex sole, or arrowtooth flounder.

[6] ''Deep-water flatfish'' means Dover sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, and deepsea sole.

[7] ''Pacific ocean perch'' means *Sebastes alutus.*

[8] ''Northern rockfish'' means *Sebastes polyspinis.* For management purposes, the 1 mt apportionment of ABC to the WYK District of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska has been included in the ''other rockfish'' species group.

[9] ''Shortraker rockfish'' means *Sebastes borealis.*

[10] ''Dusky rockfish'' means *Sebastes variabilis.*

[11] ''Rougheye and blackspotted rockfish'' means *Sebastes aleutianus* (rougheye) and *Sebastes melanostictus* (blackspotted).

[12] ''Demersal shelf rockfish'' means *Sebastes pinniger* (canary), *S. nebulosus* (china), *S. caurinus* (copper), *S. maliger* (quillback), *S. helvomaculatus* (rosethorn), *S. nigrocinctus* (tiger), and *S. ruberrimus* (yelloweye).

[13] ''Other rockfish'' means *Sebastes aurora* (aurora), *S. melanostomus* (blackgill), *S. paucispinis* (bocaccio), *S. goodei* (chilipepper), *S. crameri* (darkblotch), *S. elongatus* (greenstriped), *S. variegatus* (harlequin), *S. wilsoni* (pygmy), *S. babcocki* (redbanded), *S. proriger* (redstripe), *S. zacentrus* (sharpchin), *S. jordani* (shortbelly), *S. brevispinis* (silvergrey), *S. diploproa* (splitnose), *S. saxicola* (stripetail), *S. miniatus* (vermilion), *S. reedi* (yellowmouth), *S. entomelas* (widow), and *S. flavidus* (yellowtail). In the Eastern GOA only, other rockfish also includes northern rockfish, *S. polyspinis*.

[14] ''Other rockfish'' in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas and in the West Yakutat District means other rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish. The ''other rockfish'' species group in the SEO District only includes other rockfish.

[15] ''Big skate'' means *Raja binoculata.*

[16] ''Longnose skate'' means *Raja rhina.*

[17] ''Other skates'' means *Bathyraja and Raja* spp.

TABLE 2—FINAL 2021 OFLS, ABCS, AND TACS OF GROUNDFISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/WEST YAKUTAT, WESTERN, CENTRAL, EASTERN REGULATORY AREAS, THE WEST YAKUTAT AND SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE DISTRICTS OF THE EASTERN REGULATORY AREA, AND GULFWIDE DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Area [1]	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock [2]	Shumagin (610)	n/a	19,775	19,775
	Chirikof (620)	n/a	56,159	56,159
	Kodiak (630)	n/a	27,429	27,429
	WYK (640)	n/a	5,728	5,728
	W/C/WYK (subtotal) [2]	149,988	111,888	109,091
	SEO (650)	13,531	10,148	10,148
	Total	163,519	122,036	119,239
Pacific cod [3]	W	n/a	4,942	2,076
	C	n/a	8,458	3,806
	E	n/a	1,221	549
	Total	30,099	14,621	6,431
Sablefish [4]	W	n/a	3,003	3,003
	C	n/a	9,963	9,963
	WYK	n/a	3,323	3,323
	SEO	n/a	5,963	5,963
	E (WYK and SEO) (subtotal)	n/a	9,286	9,286
	Total	64,765	22,252	22,252
Shallow-water flatfish [5]	W	n/a	24,256	13,250
	C	n/a	28,205	28,205
	WYK	n/a	2,820	2,820
	SEO	n/a	1,128	1,128
	Total	69,129	56,409	45,403
Deep-water flatfish [6]	W	n/a	225	225
	C	n/a	1,914	1,914
	WYK	n/a	2,068	2,068
	SEO	n/a	1,719	1,719
	Total	7,040	5,926	5,926
Rex sole	W	n/a	3,013	3,013
	C	n/a	8,912	8,912
	WYK	n/a	1,206	1,206
	SEO	n/a	2,285	2,285
	Total	18,779	15,416	15,416
Arrowtooth flounder	W	n/a	30,545	14,500

TABLE 2—FINAL 2021 OFLS, ABCS, AND TACS OF GROUNDFISH FOR THE WESTERN/CENTRAL/WEST YAKUTAT, WESTERN, CENTRAL, EASTERN REGULATORY AREAS, THE WEST YAKUTAT AND SOUTHEAST OUTSIDE DISTRICTS OF THE EASTERN REGULATORY AREA, AND GULFWIDE DISTRICTS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Area [1]	OFL	ABC	TAC
	C	n/a	66,683	66,683
	WYK	n/a	9,946	6,900
	SEO	n/a	17,183	6,900
	Total	148,597	124,357	94,983
Flathead sole	W	n/a	14,191	8,650
	C	n/a	20,799	15,400
	WYK	n/a	2,424	2,424
	SEO	n/a	1,912	1,912
	Total	47,919	39,326	28,386
Pacific ocean perch [7]	W	n/a	1,379	1,379
	C	n/a	22,727	22,727
	WYK	n/a	1,410	1,410
	W/C/WYK	30,297	25,516	25,516
	SEO	5,303	4,467	4,467
	Total	35,600	29,983	29,983
Northern rockfish [8]	W	n/a	1,079	1,079
	C	n/a	3,027	3,027
	E	n/a	1	.....
	Total	4,898	4,107	4,106
Shortraker rockfish [9]	W	n/a	52	52
	C	n/a	284	284
	E	n/a	372	372
	Total	944	708	708
Dusky rockfish [10]	W	n/a	759	759
	C	n/a	2,688	2,688
	WYK	n/a	113	113
	SEO	n/a	38	38
	Total	4,396	3,598	3,598
Rougheye and Blackspotted rockfish [11]	W	n/a	169	169
	C	n/a	455	455
	E	n/a	587	587
	Total	1,455	1,211	1,211
Demersal shelf rockfish [12]	SEO	375	238	238
Thornyhead rockfish	W	n/a	326	326
	C	n/a	911	911
	E	n/a	779	779
	Total	2,688	2,016	2,016
	W and C	n/a	940	940
Other rockfish [13] [14]	WYK	n/a	369	369
	SEO	n/a	2,744	2,744
	Total	5,320	4,053	4,053
Atka mackerel	GW	6,200	4,700	3,000
Big skate [15]	W	n/a	758	758
	C	n/a	1,560	1,560
	E	n/a	890	890
	Total	4,278	3,208	3,208
Longnose skate [16]	W	n/a	158	158
	C	n/a	1,875	1,875
	E	n/a	554	554
	Total	3,449	2,587	2,587
Other skates [17]	GW	1,166	875	875
Sculpins	GW	6,932	5,199	5,199
Sharks	GW	10,913	8,184	8,184
Octopus	GW	1,307	980	980
Total	.....	639,768	471,990	407,982

[1] Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2. (W = Western Gulf of Alaska; C = Central Gulf of Alaska; E = Eastern Gulf of Alaska; WYK = West Yakutat District; SEO = Southeast Outside District; GW = Gulf-wide).

[2] The total for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas pollock ABC is 111,888 mt. After deducting 2.5 percent (2,797 mt) of that ABC for the State's pollock GHL fishery, the remaining pollock ABC of 109,091 mt (for the W/C/WYK Regulatory Areas) is apportioned among four statistical areas (Areas 610, 620, 630, and 640). These apportionments are considered subarea ACLs, rather than ABCs, for specification and reapportionment purposes. The ACLs in Areas 610, 620, and 630 are further divided by season, as detailed in Table 4 (final 2021 seasonal biomass distribution of pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, area apportionments, and seasonal allowances). In the West Yakutat (Area 640) and Southeast Outside (Area 650) Districts of the Eastern Regulatory Area, pollock is not divided into seasonal allowances.

[3] The annual Pacific cod TAC is apportioned 60 percent to the A season and 40 percent to the B season in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA. Pacific cod TAC in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA is allocated 90 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component and 10 percent to vessels harvesting Pacific cod for processing by the offshore component. Table 6 lists the final 2021 Pacific cod seasonal apportionments and sector allocations.

[4] The sablefish OFL is set Alaska-wide. Additionally, sablefish is only allocated to trawl gear for 2021. Table 8 lists the final 2021 allocation of sablefish TACs to trawl gear.

[5] ''Shallow-water flatfish'' means flatfish not including ''deep-water flatfish,'' flathead sole, rex sole, or arrowtooth flounder.

[6] ''Deep-water flatfish'' means Dover sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, and deepsea sole.

[7] ''Pacific ocean perch'' means *Sebastes alutus.*

[8] ''Northern rockfish'' means *Sebastes polyspinis.* For management purposes, the 1 mt apportionment of ABC to the WYK District of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska has been included in the ''other rockfish'' species group.

[9] ''Shortraker rockfish'' means *Sebastes borealis.*

[10] ''Dusky rockfish'' means *Sebastes variabilis.*

[11] ''Rougheye and blackspotted rockfish'' means *Sebastes aleutianus* (rougheye) and *Sebastes melanostictus* (blackspotted).

[12] ''Demersal shelf rockfish'' means *Sebastes pinniger* (canary), *S. nebulosus* (china), *S. caurinus* (copper), *S. maliger* (quillback), *S. helvomaculatus* (rosethorn), *S. nigrocinctus* (tiger), and *S. ruberrimus* (yelloweye).

[13] ''Other rockfish'' means *Sebastes aurora* (aurora), *S. melanostomus* (blackgill), *S. paucispinis* (bocaccio), *S. goodei* (chilipepper), *S. crameri* (darkblotch), *S. elongatus* (greenstriped), *S. variegatus* (harlequin), *S. wilsoni* (pygmy), *S. babcocki* (redbanded), *S. proriger* (redstripe), *S. zacentrus* (sharpchin), *S. jordani* (shortbelly), *S. brevispinis* (silvergrey), *S. diploproa* (splitnose), *S. saxicola* (stripetail), *S. miniatus* (vermilion), *S. reedi* (yellowmouth), *S. entomelas* (widow), and *S. flavidus* (yellowtail). In the Eastern GOA only, other rockfish also includes northern rockfish, *S. polyspinis.*

[14] ''Other rockfish'' in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas and in the West Yakutat District means other rockfish and demersal shelf rockfish. The ''other rockfish'' species group in the SEO District only includes other rockfish.

[15] ''Big skate'' means *Raja binoculata.*

[16] ''Longnose skate'' means *Raja rhina.*

[17] ''Other skates'' means *Bathyraja and Raja* spp.

Apportionment of Reserves

Section 679.20(b)(2) requires NMFS to set aside 20 percent of each TAC for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sculpins, sharks, and octopuses in reserve for possible apportionment at a later date during the fishing year. For 2020 and 2021, NMFS proposed reapportionment of all the reserves in the proposed 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications published in the **Federal Register** on December 3, 2019 (84 FR 66109). NMFS did not receive any public comments on the proposed reapportionments. For the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications, NMFS reapportioned, as proposed, all the reserves for pollock, Pacific cod, flatfish, sculpins, sharks, and octopuses back to the original TAC limit from which the reserve was derived (§ 679.20(b)(3)). This was done because NMFS expects, based on recent harvest patterns, that such reserves are not necessary and that the entire TAC for each of these species will be caught. The TACs listed in Tables 1 and 2 reflect reapportionments of reserve amounts to the original TAC limit for these species and species groups, *i.e.,* each final TAC for the above mentioned species or species groups contains the full TAC recommended by the Council.

Apportionments of Pollock TAC Among Seasons and Regulatory Areas, and Allocations for Processing by Inshore and Offshore Components

In the GOA, pollock is apportioned by season and area, and is further allocated for processing by inshore and offshore components. Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B), the annual pollock TAC specified for the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA is apportioned into four equal seasonal allowances of 25 percent. As established by § 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), the A, B, C, and D season allowances are available from January 20 to March 10, March 10 to May 31, August 25 to October 1, and October 1 to November 1, respectively.

Pollock TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA are apportioned among Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630 in proportion to the distribution of the pollock biomass, pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(A). In the A and B seasons, the apportionments previously were in proportion to the distribution of pollock biomass based on the four most recent NMFS winter surveys. In the C and D seasons, the apportionments were in proportion to the distribution of pollock biomass based on the four most recent NMFS summer surveys. For 2020 and 2021, the Council recommended, and NMFS approved, following the apportionment methodology that was used previously for the 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications. This methodology averages the winter and summer distribution of pollock in the Central Regulatory Area for the A season instead of using the distribution based on only the winter surveys. The average is intended to reflect the best available information about migration patterns, distribution of pollock, and the performance of the fishery in the area during the A season for the 2020 and 2021 fishing years. For the A season, the apportionment is based on an adjusted estimate of the relative distribution of pollock biomass of approximately 2 percent, 75 percent, and 23 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively. For the B season, the apportionment is based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass of approximately 2 percent, 89 percent, and 9 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively. For the C and D seasons, the apportionment is based on the relative distribution of pollock biomass of approximately 36 percent, 27 percent, and 37 percent in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630, respectively. The pollock chapter of the 2019 SAFE report (see **ADDRESSES**) contains a comprehensive description of the apportionment process and reasons for the minor changes from past apportionments.

Within any fishing year, the amount by which a pollock seasonal allowance is underharvested or overharvested may be added to, or subtracted from, subsequent seasonal allowances for the Western and Central Regulatory Areas in a manner to be determined by the Regional Administrator (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B)). The rollover amount is limited to 20 percent of the subsequent seasonal TAC apportionment for the statistical area. Any unharvested pollock above the 20-percent limit could be further distributed to the other statistical areas, in proportion to the estimated biomass in the subsequent season in those statistical areas and in an amount no

more than 20 percent of the seasonal TAC apportionment in those statistical areas (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B)). The pollock TACs in the WYK and the SEO Districts of 5,554 mt and 10,148 mt, respectively, in 2020, and 5,728 mt and 10,148 mt, respectively, in 2021, are not allocated by season.

Tables 3 and 4 list the final 2020 and 2021 seasonal biomass distribution of pollock in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, area apportionments, and seasonal allowances. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown. Section 679.20(a)(6)(i) requires the allocation of 100 percent of the pollock TAC in all GOA regulatory areas and all seasonal allowances to vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component after subtraction of pollock amounts projected by the Regional Administrator to be caught by, or delivered to, the offshore component incidental to directed fishing for other groundfish species. Thus, the amount of pollock available for harvest by vessels harvesting pollock for processing by the offshore component is that amount that will be taken as incidental catch during directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock, up to the maximum retainable amounts allowed by § 679.20(e) and (f). At this time, these incidental catch amounts of pollock are unknown and will be determined during the fishing year during the course of fishing activities by the offshore component.

TABLE 3—FINAL 2020 DISTRIBUTION OF POLLOCK IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL REGULATORY AREAS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA; SEASONAL BIOMASS DISTRIBUTION; AREA APPORTIONMENTS; AND SEASONAL ALLOWANCES OF ANNUAL TAC

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentages are rounded to the nearest 0.01]

Season [1]	Shumagin (Area 610)		Chirikof (Area 620)		Kodiak (Area 630)		Total [2]
A (Jan 20–Mar 10)	517	2.06%	18,757	74.86%	5,783	23.08%	25,057
B (Mar 10–May 31)	517	2.06	22,222	88.68	2,318	9.25	25,057
C (Aug 25–Oct 1)	9,070	36.20	6,739	26.89	9,248	36.91	25,057
D (Oct 1–Nov 1)	9,070	36.20	6,739	26.89	9,248	36.91	25,057
Annual Total	19,175	.....	54,456	.....	26,597	.....	100,228

[1] As established by § 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), the A, B, C, and D season allowances are available from January 20 to March 10, March 10 to May 31, August 25 to October 1, and October 1 to November 1, respectively. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown in this table.

[2] The WYK District and SEO District pollock TACs are not allocated by season and are not included in the total pollock TACs shown in this table.

TABLE 4—FINAL 2021 DISTRIBUTION OF POLLOCK IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL REGULATORY AREAS OF THE GULF OF ALASKA; SEASONAL BIOMASS DISTRIBUTION; AREA APPORTIONMENTS; AND SEASONAL ALLOWANCES OF ANNUAL TAC

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton and percentages are rounded to the nearest 0.01]

Season [1]	Shumagin (Area 610)		Chirikof (Area 620)		Kodiak (Area 630)		Total [2]
A (Jan 20–Mar 10)	533	2.06%	19,344	74.86%	5,964	23.08%	25,841
B (Mar 10–May 31)	533	2.06	22,917	88.68	2,391	9.25	25,841
C (Aug 25–Oct 1)	9,354	36.20	6,950	26.89	9,537	36.91	25,841
D (Oct 1–Nov 1)	9,354	36.20	6,950	26.89	9,537	36.91	25,841
Annual Total	19,775	.....	56,159	.....	27,429	.....	103,363

[1] As established by § 679.23(d)(2)(i) through (iv), the A, B, C, and D season allowances are available from January 20 to March 10, March 10 to May 31, August 25 to October 1, and October 1 to November 1, respectively. The amounts of pollock for processing by the inshore and offshore components are not shown in this table.

[2] The WYK District and SEO District pollock TACs are not allocated by season and are not included in the total pollock TACs shown in this table.

Annual and Seasonal Apportionments of Pacific Cod TAC

Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(12)(i), NMFS seasonally allocates the 2020 and 2021 Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA among gear and operational sectors. NMFS also allocates the Pacific cod TACs annually between the inshore (90 percent) and offshore (10 percent) components in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA (§ 679.20(a)(6)(ii)). In the Central GOA, the Pacific cod TAC is apportioned seasonally first to vessels using jig gear, and then among CVs less than 50 feet in length overall using hook-and-line gear, CVs equal to or greater than 50 feet in length overall using hook-and-line gear, catcher/processors (C/Ps) using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, C/Ps using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear (§ 679.20(a)(12)(i)(B)). In the Western GOA, the Pacific cod TAC is apportioned seasonally first to vessels using jig gear, and then among CVs using hook-and-line gear, C/Ps using hook-and-line gear, CVs using trawl gear, C/Ps using trawl gear, and vessels using pot gear (§ 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A)). The overall seasonal apportionments in the Western and Central GOA are 60 percent of the annual TAC to the A season and 40 percent of the annual TAC to the B season.

Under § 679.20(a)(12)(ii), any overage or underage of the Pacific cod allowance from the A season may be subtracted from, or added to, the subsequent B season allowance. In addition, any portion of the hook-and-line, trawl, pot, or jig sector allocations that is determined by NMFS as likely to go unharvested by a sector may be reallocated to other sectors for harvest during the remainder of the fishery year.

Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(12)(i)(A) and (B), a portion of the annual Pacific cod TACs in the Western and Central GOA will be allocated to vessels with a

Federal fisheries permit that use jig gear before the TACs are apportioned among other non-jig sectors. In accordance with the FMP, the annual jig sector allocations may increase to up to 6 percent of the annual Western and Central GOA Pacific cod TACs, depending on the annual performance of the jig sector (see Table 1 of Amendment 83 to the FMP for a detailed discussion of the jig sector allocation process (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011)). Jig sector allocation increases are established for a minimum of two years.

NMFS has evaluated the 2019 harvest performance of the jig sector in the Western and Central GOA, and is establishing the 2020 and 2021 Pacific cod apportionments to this sector based on its historical harvest performance from 2014 to 2019. For 2020 and 2021, NMFS allocates the jig sector 3.5 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Western GOA. This is an increase from the 2019 jig sector allocation of 2.5 percent. The 2020 and 2021 allocations consist of a base allocation of 2.5 percent of the Western GOA Pacific cod TAC, and a 1.0 percent performance increase because in 2019 the jig sector harvested greater than 90 percent of its 2019 Pacific cod allocation.

For 2020 and 2021, NMFS allocates the jig sector 1.0 percent of the annual Pacific cod TAC in the Central GOA. This is the same percent as the 2019 jig sector allocation because in 2019 this sector harvested less than 90 percent of its 2019 Pacific cod allocation. The 2020 and 2021 allocations consist of a base allocation of 1.0 percent of the Central GOA Pacific cod TAC, and no additional performance increase in the Central GOA.

Tables 5 and 6 list the seasonal apportionments and allocations of the 2020 and 2021 Pacific cod TACs.

TABLE 5—FINAL 2020 SEASONAL APPORTIONMENTS AND ALLOCATION OF PACIFIC COD TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC) AMOUNTS IN THE GOA; ALLOCATIONS IN THE WESTERN GOA AND CENTRAL GOA SECTORS, AND THE EASTERN GOA INSHORE AND OFFSHORE PROCESSING COMPONENTS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Regulatory area and sector [1]	Annual allocation (mt)	A Season		B Season	
		Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)	Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)
Western GOA:					
Jig (3.5% of TAC)	73	N/A	44	N/A	29
Hook-and-line CV	28	0.70	14	0.70	14
Hook-and-line C/P	397	10.90	218	8.90	178
Trawl CV	769	27.70	555	10.70	214
Trawl C/P	48	0.90	18	1.50	30
All Pot CV and Pot C/P	761	19.80	397	18.20	365
Total	2,076	60.00	1,246	40.00	830
Central GOA:					
Jig (1.0% of TAC)	38	N/A	23	N/A	15
Hook-and-line <50 CV	550	9.32	351	5.29	199
Hook-and-line ≥50 CV	253	5.61	211	1.10	41
Hook-and-line C/P	192	4.11	155	1.00	38
Trawl CV [2]	1,567	21.14	796	20.45	771
Trawl C/P	158	2.00	75	2.19	83
All Pot CV and Pot C/P	1,048	17.83	672	9.97	376
Total	3,806	60.00	2,284	40.00	1,522
Eastern GOA:		Inshore (90% of Annual TAC)		Offshore (10% of Annual TAC)	
	549		494		55

[1] NMFS prohibited directed fishing for Pacific cod in the GOA on January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020 (84 FR 70438, December 23, 2019), therefore; the seasonal apportionments and allocations in Table 5 are to support incidental catch of Pacific cod in other fisheries. While the directed fishing closure is effective, the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

[2] Trawl catcher vessels participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives receive 3.81 percent, or 145 mt, of the annual Central GOA TAC (see Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679), which is deducted from the Trawl CV B season allowance (see Table 12. Final 2020 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA and Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679).

TABLE 6—FINAL 2021 SEASONAL APPORTIONMENTS AND ALLOCATION OF PACIFIC COD TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC) AMOUNTS IN THE GOA; ALLOCATIONS IN THE WESTERN GOA AND CENTRAL GOA SECTORS, AND THE EASTERN GOA INSHORE AND OFFSHORE PROCESSING COMPONENTS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Regulatory area and sector	Annual allocation (mt)	A Season		B Season	
		Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)	Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)
Western GOA:					

TABLE 6—FINAL 2021 SEASONAL APPORTIONMENTS AND ALLOCATION OF PACIFIC COD TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC) AMOUNTS IN THE GOA; ALLOCATIONS IN THE WESTERN GOA AND CENTRAL GOA SECTORS, AND THE EASTERN GOA INSHORE AND OFFSHORE PROCESSING COMPONENTS—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Regulatory area and sector	Annual allocation (mt)	A Season		B Season	
		Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)	Sector percentage of annual non-jig TAC	Seasonal allowances (mt)
Jig (3.5% of TAC)	73	N/A	44	N/A	29
Hook-and-line CV	28	0.70	14	0.70	14
Hook-and-line C/P	397	10.90	218	8.90	178
Trawl CV	769	27.70	555	10.70	214
Trawl C/P	48	0.90	18	1.50	30
All Pot CV and Pot C/P	761	19.80	397	18.20	365
Total	2,076	60.00	1,246	40.00	830
Central GOA:					
Jig (1.0% of TAC)	38	N/A	23	N/A	15
Hook-and-line <50 CV	550	9.32	351	5.29	199
Hook-and-line ≥50 CV	253	5.61	351	1.10	41
Hook-and-line C/P	192	4.11	211	1.00	38
Trawl CV [1]	1,597	21.14	796	20.45	771
Trawl C/P	158	2.00	75	2.19	83
All Pot CV and Pot C/P	1,048	17.83	672	9.97	376
Total	3,806	60.00	2,284	40.00	1,522
Eastern GOA:		Inshore (90% of Annual TAC)		Offshore (10% of Annual TAC)	
	549		494		55

[1] Trawl catcher vessels participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives receive 3.81 percent, or 145 mt, of the annual Central GOA TAC (see Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679), which is deducted from the Trawl CV B season allowance (see Table 13. Final 2021 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA and Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679).

Allocations of the Sablefish TAC Amounts to Vessels Using Fixed and Trawl Gear

Section 679.20(a)(4)(i) and (ii) require allocations of sablefish TACs for each of the regulatory areas and districts to fixed and trawl gear. In the Western and Central Regulatory Areas, 80 percent of each TAC is allocated to fixed gear, and 20 percent of each TAC is allocated to trawl gear. In the Eastern Regulatory Area, 95 percent of the TAC is allocated to fixed gear, and 5 percent is allocated to trawl gear. The trawl gear allocation in the Eastern Regulatory Area may only be used to support incidental catch of sablefish using trawl gear while directed fishing for other target species (§ 679.20(a)(4)(i)).

In recognition of the prohibition against trawl gear in the SEO District of the Eastern Regulatory Area, the Council recommended and NMFS approves specifying for incidental catch the allocation of 5 percent of the combined Eastern Regulatory Area sablefish TAC to trawl gear in the WYK District of the Eastern Regulatory Area. The remainder of the WYK District sablefish TAC is allocated to vessels using fixed gear. NMFS allocates 100 percent of the sablefish TAC in the SEO District to vessels using fixed gear. This action results in a 2020 allocation of 300 mt to trawl gear and 2,043 mt to fixed gear in the WYK District, a 2020 allocation of 3,663 mt to fixed gear in the SEO District, and a 2021 allocation of 464 mt to trawl gear in the WYK District. Table 7 lists the allocations of the 2020 sablefish TACs to fixed and trawl gear. Table 8 lists the allocations of the 2021 sablefish TACs to trawl gear.

The Council recommended that a trawl sablefish TAC be established for two years so that retention of incidental catch of sablefish by trawl gear could commence in January in the second year of the groundfish harvest specifications. Both the 2020 and 2021 trawl allocations are specified in these final harvest specifications, in Tables 7 and 8, respectively.

The Council also recommended that the fixed gear sablefish TAC be established annually to ensure that this IFQ fishery is conducted concurrently with the halibut IFQ fishery and is based on the most recent survey information. Since there is an annual assessment for sablefish and since the final harvest specifications are expected to be published before the IFQ season begins in March 2020, the Council recommended that the fixed gear sablefish TAC be set annually, rather than for two years, so that the best scientific information available could be considered in establishing the sablefish ABCs and TACs. Accordingly, Table 7 lists the 2020 fixed gear allocations, and the 2021 fixed gear allocations will be specified in the 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications.

With the exception of the trawl allocations that are provided to the Rockfish Program (see Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679), directed fishing for sablefish with trawl gear in the GOA is closed during the fishing year. Also, fishing for groundfish with trawl gear is prohibited prior to January 20 (§ 679.23(c)). Therefore, it is not likely that the sablefish allocation to trawl gear would be reached before the effective date of the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications.

TABLE 7—FINAL 2020 SABLEFISH TAC AMOUNTS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA AND ALLOCATIONS TO FIXED AND TRAWL GEAR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area/district	TAC	Fixed gear allocation	Trawl gear allocation
Western	1,942	1,554	388
Central [1]	6,445	5,156	1,289
West Yakutat [2]	2,343	2,043	300
Southeast Outside	3,663	3,663	0
Total	14,393	12,415	1,978

[1] The trawl allocation of sablefish in the Central Regulatory Area is further apportioned to the Rockfish Program cooperatives (663 mt). See Table 12: Final 2020 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA. This results in 626 mt being available for the non-Rockfish Program trawl fisheries.

[2] The trawl allocation is based on allocating 5 percent of the combined Eastern Regulatory Area (West Yakutat and Southeast Outside Districts) sablefish TAC as incidental catch to trawl gear in the West Yakutat District.

TABLE 8—FINAL 2021 SABLEFISH TAC AMOUNTS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA AND ALLOCATION TO TRAWL GEAR [1]

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area/district	TAC	Fixed gear allocation	Trawl gear allocation
Western	3,003	n/a	601
Central [2]	9,963	n/a	1,993
West Yakutat [3]	3,323	n/a	464
Southeast Outside	5,963	n/a	0
Total	22,252	n/a	3,058

[1] The Council recommended that the final 2021 harvest specifications for the fixed gear sablefish Individual Fishing Quota fisheries not be specified in the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications.

[2] The trawl allocation of sablefish in the Central Regulatory Area is further apportioned to the Rockfish Program cooperatives (1,025 mt). See Table 13: Final 2021 Apportionments of Rockfish Secondary Species in the Central GOA. This results in 968 mt being available for the non-Rockfish Program trawl fisheries.

[3] The trawl allocation is based on allocating 5 percent of the combined Eastern Regulatory Area (West Yakutat and Southeast Outside Districts) sablefish TAC as incidental catch to trawl gear in the West Yakutat District.

Allocations, Apportionments, and Sideboard Limits for the Rockfish Program

These final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for the GOA include the fishery cooperative allocations and sideboard limitations established by the Rockfish Program. Program participants are primarily trawl CVs and trawl C/Ps, with limited participation by vessels using longline gear. The Rockfish Program assigns quota share and cooperative quota to participants for primary species (Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish) and secondary species (Pacific cod, rougheye and blackspotted rockfish, sablefish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish), allows a participant holding a license limitation program (LLP) license with rockfish quota share to form a rockfish cooperative with other persons, and allows holders of C/P LLP licenses to opt out of the fishery. The Rockfish Program also has an entry level fishery for rockfish primary species for vessels using longline gear. Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear.

Under the Rockfish Program, rockfish primary species in the Central GOA are allocated to participants after deducting for incidental catch needs in other directed groundfish fisheries (§ 679.81(a)(2)). Participants in the Rockfish Program also receive a portion of the Central GOA TAC of specific secondary species. In addition to groundfish species, the Rockfish Program allocates a portion of the halibut PSC limit (191 mt) from the third season deep-water species fishery allowance for the GOA trawl fisheries to Rockfish Program participants (§ 679.81(d) and Table 28d to 50 CFR part 679). The Rockfish Program also establishes sideboard limits to restrict the ability of harvesters operating under the Rockfish Program to increase their participation in other, non-Rockfish Program fisheries. These restrictions and halibut PSC limits are discussed in a subsequent section in this rule titled ''Rockfish Program Groundfish Sideboard and Halibut PSC Limitations.''

Section 679.81(a)(2)(ii) and Table 28e to 50 CFR part 679 require allocations of 5 mt of Pacific ocean perch, 5 mt of northern rockfish, and 50 mt of dusky rockfish to the entry level longline fishery in 2020 and 2021. The allocation for the entry level longline fishery may increase incrementally each year if the catch exceeds 90 percent of the allocation of a species. The incremental increase in the allocation would continue each year until it reaches the maximum percent of the TAC for that species. In 2019, the catch of Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, and dusky rockfish did not attain the 90 percent threshold, and those final allocations for 2020 remain the same as the 2019 allocations. The remainder of the TACs for the rockfish primary species are allocated to the CV and C/P cooperatives (§ 679.81(a)(2)(iii)). Table 9 lists the allocations of the 2020 and 2021 TACs for each rockfish primary species to the entry level longline fishery, the potential incremental increases for future years, and the maximum percentages of the TACs assigned to the Rockfish Program that may be allocated to the rockfish entry level longline fishery.

TABLE 9—FINAL 2020 AND INITIAL 2021 ALLOCATIONS OF ROCKFISH PRIMARY SPECIES TO THE ENTRY LEVEL LONGLINE FISHERY IN THE CENTRAL GULF OF ALASKA

Rockfish primary species	2020 and 2021 allocations	Incremental increase in 2021 if < 90% of 2020 allocation is harvested	Up to maximum % of TAC
Pacific ocean perch	5 metric tons	5 metric tons	1
Northern rockfish	5 metric tons	5 metric tons	2
Dusky rockfish	50 metric tons	20 metric tons	5

Section 679.81 requires allocations of rockfish primary species among various sectors of the Rockfish Program. Tables 10 and 11 list the final 2020 and 2021 allocations of rockfish primary species in the Central GOA to the entry level longline fishery, and rockfish CV and C/P cooperatives in the Rockfish Program. NMFS also is setting aside incidental catch amounts (ICAs) for other directed fisheries in the Central GOA of 3,000 mt of Pacific ocean perch, 300 mt of northern rockfish, and 250 mt of dusky rockfish. These amounts are based on recent average incidental catches in the Central GOA by other groundfish fisheries.

Allocations among vessels belonging to CV or C/P cooperatives are not included in these final harvest specifications. Rockfish Program applications for CV cooperatives and C/P cooperatives are not due to NMFS until March 1 of each calendar year; therefore, NMFS cannot calculate 2020 and 2021 allocations in conjunction with these final harvest specifications. NMFS will post the 2020 allocations on the Alaska Region website at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/sustainable-fisheries/alaska-fisheries-management-reports#central-goa-rockfish* when they become available after March 1.

TABLE 10—FINAL 2020 ALLOCATIONS OF ROCKFISH PRIMARY SPECIES IN THE CENTRAL GULF OF ALASKA TO THE ENTRY LEVEL LONGLINE FISHERY AND ROCKFISH COOPERATIVES IN THE ROCKFISH PROGRAM

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Rockfish primary species	Central GOA annual TAC	Incidental catch allowance	TAC minus ICA	Allocation to the entry level longline [1] fishery	Allocation to the rockfish cooperatives [2]
Pacific ocean perch	23,678	3,000	20,678	5	20,673
Northern rockfish	3,178	300	2,878	5	2,873
Dusky rockfish	2,746	250	2,496	50	2,446
Total	29,602	3,550	26,052	60	25,992

[1] Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear (50 CFR 679.2).
[2] Rockfish cooperatives include vessels in CV and C/P cooperatives (50 CFR 679.81).

TABLE 11—FINAL 2021 ALLOCATIONS OF ROCKFISH PRIMARY SPECIES IN THE CENTRAL GULF OF ALASKA TO THE ENTRY LEVEL LONGLINE FISHERY AND ROCKFISH COOPERATIVES IN THE ROCKFISH PROGRAM

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Rockfish primary species	Central GOA annual TAC	Incidental catch allowance	TAC minus ICA	Allocation to the entry level longline [1] fishery	Allocation to the rockfish cooperatives [2]
Pacific ocean perch	22,727	3,000	19,727	5	19,722
Northern rockfish	3,027	300	2,727	5	2,722
Dusky rockfish	2,688	250	2,438	50	2,388
Total	28,442	3,550	24,892	60	24,832

[1] Longline gear includes hook-and-line, jig, troll, and handline gear (50 CFR 679.2).
[2] Rockfish cooperatives include vessels in CV and C/P cooperatives (50 CFR 679.81).

Section 679.81(c) and Table 28c to 50 CFR part 679 require allocations of rockfish secondary species to CV and C/P cooperatives in the Central GOA. CV cooperatives receive allocations of Pacific cod, sablefish from the trawl gear allocation, and thornyhead rockfish. C/P cooperatives receive allocations of sablefish from the trawl gear allocation, rougheye and blackspotted rockfish, shortraker rockfish, and thornyhead rockfish. Tables 12 and 13 list the apportionments of the 2020 and 2021 TACs of rockfish secondary species in the Central GOA to CV and C/P cooperatives.

TABLE 12—FINAL 2020 APPORTIONMENTS OF ROCKFISH SECONDARY SPECIES IN THE CENTRAL GOA TO CATCHER VESSEL AND CATCHER/PROCESSOR COOPERATIVES

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Rockfish secondary species	Central GOA annual TAC	Catcher vessel cooperatives		Catcher/processor cooperatives	
		Percentage of TAC	Apportionment (mt)	Percentage of TAC	Apportionment (mt)
Pacific cod	3,806	3.81	145	0.00	0
Sablefish	6,445	6.78	437	3.51	226
Shortraker rockfish	284	0.00	0	40.00	114
Rougheye/blackspotted rockfish	455	0.00	0	58.87	268
Thornyhead rockfish	911	7.84	71	26.50	241

TABLE 13—FINAL 2021 APPORTIONMENTS OF ROCKFISH SECONDARY SPECIES IN THE CENTRAL GOA TO CATCHER VESSEL AND CATCHER/PROCESSOR COOPERATIVES

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Rockfish secondary species	Central GOA annual TAC	Catcher vessel cooperatives		Catcher/processor cooperatives	
		Percentage of TAC	Apportionment (mt)	Percentage of TAC	Apportionment (mt)
Pacific cod	3,806	3.81	145	0.00	0
Sablefish	9,963	6.78	675	3.51	350
Shortraker rockfish	284	0.00	0	40.00	114
Rougheye/blackspotted rockfish	455	0.00	0	58.87	268
Thornyhead rockfish	911	7.84	71	26.50	241

Halibut PSC Limits

Section 679.21(d) establishes annual halibut PSC limit apportionments to trawl gear and hook-and-line gear, and authorizes the establishment of apportionments for pot gear. In December 2019, the Council recommended halibut PSC limits of 1,706 mt for trawl gear, 257 mt for hook-and-line gear, and 9 mt for the demersal shelf (DSR) rockfish fishery in the SEO District for both 2020 and 2021.

The DSR fishery in the SEO District is defined at § 679.21(d)(2)(ii)(A). This fishery is apportioned 9 mt of the halibut PSC limit in recognition of its small-scale harvests of groundfish (§ 679.21(d)(2)(i)(A)). The separate halibut PSC limit for the DSR fishery is intended to prevent that fishery from being impacted from the halibut PSC incurred by other GOA fisheries. NMFS estimates low halibut bycatch in the DSR fishery because (1) the duration of the DSR fisheries and the gear soak times are short, (2) the DSR fishery occurs in the winter when there is less overlap in the distribution of DSR and halibut, and (3) the directed commercial DSR fishery has a low DSR TAC. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game sets the commercial GHL for the DSR fishery after deducting (1) estimates of DSR incidental catch in all fisheries (including halibut and subsistence); and (2) the allocation to the DSR sport fishery. Of the 261 mt TAC for DSR in 2019, 50 mt were available for directed fishing by the DSR commercial fishery, of which 18 mt were harvested (through December 16, 2019).

The FMP authorizes the Council to exempt specific gear from the halibut PSC limits. NMFS, after consultation with the Council, exempts pot gear, the sablefish IFQ hook-and-line gear fishery categories, and jig gear from the non-trawl halibut PSC limit for 2020 and 2021. The Council recommended, and NMFS approves, these exemptions because: (1) The pot gear fisheries have low annual halibut bycatch mortality, (2) IFQ program regulations prohibit discard of halibut if any halibut IFQ permit holder on board a catcher vessel holds unused halibut IFQ for that vessel category and the IFQ regulatory area in which the vessel is operating (§ 679.7(f)(11)), (3) some sablefish IFQ fishermen hold halibut IFQ permits and are therefore required to retain the halibut they catch while fishing sablefish IFQ, and (4) NMFS estimates negligible halibut mortality for the jig gear fisheries given the small amount of groundfish harvested by jig gear, the selective nature of jig gear, and the high survival rates of halibut caught and released with jig gear.

The best available information on estimated halibut bycatch consists of data collected by fisheries observers during 2019. The calculated halibut bycatch mortality through December 31, 2019, is 1,102 mt for trawl gear and 76 mt for hook-and-line gear for a total halibut mortality of 1,178 mt. This halibut mortality was calculated using groundfish and halibut catch data from the NMFS Alaska Region's catch accounting system. This accounting system contains historical and recent catch information compiled from each Alaska groundfish fishery.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(i) and (ii) authorizes NMFS to seasonally apportion the halibut PSC limits after consultation with the Council. The FMP and regulations require that the Council and NMFS consider the following information in seasonally apportioning halibut PSC limits: (1) Seasonal distribution of halibut; (2) seasonal distribution of target groundfish species relative to halibut distribution; (3) expected halibut bycatch needs on a seasonal basis relative to changes in halibut biomass and expected catch of target groundfish species; (4) expected bycatch rates on a seasonal basis; (5) expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons; (6) expected actual start of fishing effort; and (7) economic effects of establishing seasonal halibut allocations on segments of the target groundfish industry. The Council considered information from the 2019 SAFE report, NMFS catch data, State of Alaska catch data, International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) stock

assessment and mortality data, and public testimony when apportioning the halibut PSC limits. NMFS concurs with the Council's recommendations listed in Table 14, which shows the final 2020 and 2021 Pacific halibut PSC limits, allowances, and apportionments.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(iii) and (iv) specifies that any underages or overages of a seasonal apportionment of a halibut PSC limit will be added to or deducted from the next respective seasonal apportionment within the fishing year.

TABLE 14—FINAL 2020 AND 2021 PACIFIC HALIBUT PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH (PSC) LIMITS, ALLOWANCES, AND APPORTIONMENTS

[Values are in metric tons]

Trawl gear			Hook-and-line gear [1]				
			Other than DSR			DSR	
Season	Percent	Amount	Season	Percent	Amount	Season	Amount
January 20–April 1	30.5	519	January 1–June 10	86	221	January 1–December 31	9
April 1–July 1	20.0	341	June 10–September 1	2	5		
July 1–August 1	27.0	462	September 1–December 31.	12	31		
August 1–October 1	7.5	128					
October 1–December 31	15.0	256					
Total		1,706			257		9

[1] The Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limit for hook-and-line gear is allocated to the DSR fishery in the SEO District and to the hook-and-line fisheries other than the DSR fishery. The hook-and-line sablefish IFQ fishery is exempt from halibut PSC limits, as are pot and jig gear for all groundfish fisheries. Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

Section 679.21(d)(3)(ii) authorizes further apportionment of the trawl halibut PSC limit to trawl fishery categories listed in § 679.21(d)(3)(iii). The annual apportionments are based on each category's proportional share of the anticipated halibut bycatch mortality during the fishing year and optimization of the total amount of groundfish harvest under the halibut PSC limit. The fishery categories for the trawl halibut PSC limits are: (1) A deep-water species fishery, composed of sablefish, rockfish, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, and arrowtooth flounder; and (2) a shallow-water species fishery, composed of pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, and ''other species'' (sculpins, sharks, and octopuses) (§ 679.21(d)(3)(iii)). Halibut mortality incurred while directed fishing for skates with trawl gear accrues towards the shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC limit (69 FR 26320, May 12, 2004).

NMFS will combine available trawl halibut PSC limit apportionments on May 15 during the second season deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries for use in either fishery from May 15 through June 30 (§ 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(D)). This is intended to maintain groundfish harvest while minimizing halibut bycatch by these sectors to the extent practicable. This provides the deep-water and shallow-water species trawl fisheries additional flexibility and the incentive to participate in fisheries at times of the year that may have lower halibut PSC rates relative to other times of the year.

Table 15 lists the final 2020 and 2021 apportionments of trawl halibut PSC limits between the trawl gear deep-water and shallow-water species fishery categories.

Table 28d to 50 CFR part 679 specifies the amount of the trawl halibut PSC limit that is assigned to the CV and C/P sectors that are participating in the Rockfish Program. This includes 117 mt of halibut PSC limit to the CV sector and 74 mt of halibut PSC limit to the C/P sector. These amounts are allocated from the trawl deep-water species fishery's halibut PSC third seasonal apportionment. After the combined CV and C/P halibut PSC limit allocation of 191 mt to the Rockfish Program, 150 mt remains for the trawl deep-water species fishery's halibut PSC third seasonal apportionment.

Section 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(B) limits the amount of the halibut PSC limit allocated to Rockfish Program participants that could be re-apportioned to the general GOA trawl fisheries during the current fishing year to no more than 55 percent of the unused annual halibut PSC limit apportioned to Rockfish Program participants. The remainder of the unused Rockfish Program halibut PSC limit is unavailable for use by any person for the remainder of the fishing year (§ 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(C)).

TABLE 15—FINAL 2020 AND 2021 APPORTIONMENT OF PACIFIC HALIBUT PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH LIMITS BETWEEN THE TRAWL GEAR DEEP-WATER SPECIES FISHERY AND THE SHALLOW-WATER SPECIES FISHERY CATEGORIES

[Values are in metric tons]

Season	Shallow-water	Deep-water [1]	Total
January 20–April 1	384	135	519
April 1–July 1	85	256	341
July 1–August 1	121	341	462
August 1–October 1	53	75	128
Subtotal January 20–October 1	643	807	1,450
October 1–December 31 [2]			256

TABLE 15—FINAL 2020 AND 2021 APPORTIONMENT OF PACIFIC HALIBUT PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH LIMITS BETWEEN THE TRAWL GEAR DEEP-WATER SPECIES FISHERY AND THE SHALLOW-WATER SPECIES FISHERY CATEGORIES—Continued

[Values are in metric tons]

Season	Shallow-water	Deep-water [1]	Total
Total			1,706

[1] Vessels participating in cooperatives in the Central GOA Rockfish Program will receive 191 mt of the third season (July 1 through August 1) deep-water species fishery halibut PSC apportionment.
[2] There is no apportionment between trawl shallow-water and deep-water species fishery categories during the fifth season (October 1 through December 31).

Section 679.21(d)(2)(i)(B) requires that the ''other hook-and-line fishery'' halibut PSC limit apportionment to vessels using hook-and-line gear must be apportioned between CVs and C/Ps in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) in conjunction with these harvest specifications. A comprehensive description and example of the calculations necessary to apportion the ''other hook-and-line fishery'' halibut PSC limit between the hook-and-line CV and C/P sectors were included in the proposed rule to implement Amendment 83 to the FMP (76 FR 44700, July 26, 2011) and are not repeated here.

Pursuant to § 679.21(d)(2)(iii), the hook-and-line halibut PSC limit for the ''other hook-and-line fishery'' is apportioned between the CV and C/P sectors in proportion to the total Western and Central GOA Pacific cod allocations, which vary annually based on the proportion of the Pacific cod biomass between the Western, Central, and Eastern GOA. Pacific cod is apportioned among these three management areas based on the percentage of overall biomass per area, as calculated in the 2019 Pacific cod stock assessment. Updated information in the final 2019 SAFE report describes this distributional calculation, which allocates ABC among GOA regulatory areas on the basis of the three most recent stock surveys. For 2020 and 2021, the distribution of the total GOA Pacific cod ABC is 32 percent to the Western GOA, 59 percent to the Central GOA, and 9 percent to the Eastern GOA. Therefore, the calculations made in accordance with § 679.21(d)(2)(iii) incorporate the most recent information on GOA Pacific cod distribution with respect to establishing the annual halibut PSC limits for the CV and C/P hook-and-line sectors. Additionally, the annual halibut PSC limits for both the CV and C/P sectors of the ''other hook-and-line fishery'' are divided into three seasonal apportionments, using seasonal percentages of 86 percent, 2 percent, and 12 percent.

For 2020 and 2021, NMFS apportions halibut PSC limits of 144 mt and 113 mt to the hook-and-line CV and hook-and-line C/P sectors, respectively. Table 16 lists the final 2020 and 2021 apportionments of halibut PSC limits between the hook-and-line CV and the hook-and-line C/P sectors of the ''other hook-and-line fishery.''

No later than November 1 of each year, NMFS will calculate the projected unused amount of halibut PSC limit by either of the CV or C/P hook-and-line sectors of the ''other hook-and-line fishery'' for the remainder of the year. The projected unused amount of halibut PSC limit is made available to the other hook-and-line sector for the remainder of that fishing year (§ 679.21(d)(2)(iii)(C)), if NMFS determines that an additional amount of halibut PSC is necessary for that sector to continue its directed fishing operations.

TABLE 16—FINAL 2020 AND 2021 APPORTIONMENTS OF THE ''OTHER HOOK-AND-LINE FISHERY'' ANNUAL HALIBUT PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH ALLOWANCE BETWEEN THE HOOK-AND-LINE GEAR CATCHER VESSEL AND CATCHER/PROCESSOR SECTORS

[Values are in metric tons]

''Other than DSR'' allowance	Hook-and-line sector	Sector annual amount	Season	Seasonal percentage	Sector seasonal amount
257	Catcher Vessel	144	January 1–June 10	86	124
			June 10–September 1	2	3
			September 1–December 31	12	17
	Catcher/Processor	113	January 1–June 10	86	97
			June 10–September 1	2	2
			September 1–December 31	12	14

Estimates of Halibut Biomass and Stock Condition

The IPHC annually assesses the abundance and potential yield of the Pacific halibut stock using all available data from the commercial and sport fisheries, other removals, and scientific surveys. Additional information on the Pacific halibut stock assessment may be found in the IPHC's 2019 Pacific halibut stock assessment (December 2019), available on the IPHC website at *www.iphc.int.* The IPHC considered the 2019 Pacific halibut stock assessment at its February 2020 annual meeting when it set the 2020 commercial halibut fishery catch limits.

Halibut Discard Mortality Rates

To monitor halibut bycatch mortality allowances and apportionments, the Regional Administrator uses observed halibut incidental catch rates, halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs), and estimates of groundfish catch to project when a fishery's halibut bycatch mortality allowance or seasonal apportionment is reached. Halibut incidental catch rates are based on observers' estimates of halibut incidental catch in the groundfish fishery. DMRs are estimates of the proportion of incidentally caught halibut that do not survive after being returned to the sea. The cumulative

halibut mortality that accrues to a particular halibut PSC limit is the product of a DMR multiplied by the estimated halibut PSC. DMRs are estimated using the best scientific information available in conjunction with the annual GOA stock assessment process. The DMR methodology and findings are included as an appendix to the annual GOA groundfish SAFE report.

In 2016, the DMR estimation methodology underwent revisions per the Council's directive. An interagency halibut working group (IPHC, Council, and NMFS staff) developed improved estimation methods that have undergone review by the GOA Plan Team, SSC, and the Council. A summary of the revised methodology is contained in the GOA proposed 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications (81 FR 87881, December 6, 2016), and the comprehensive discussion of the working group's statistical methodology is available from the Council (see **ADDRESSES**). The DMR working group's revised methodology is intended to improve estimation accuracy, transparency, and transferability in the methodology used for calculating DMRs. The working group will continue to consider improvements to the methodology used to calculate halibut mortality, including potential changes to the reference period (the period of data used for calculating the DMRs). Future DMRs may change based on additional years of observer sampling, which could provide more recent and accurate data and which could improve the accuracy of estimation and progress on methodology. The new methodology will continue to ensure that NMFS is using DMRs that more accurately reflect halibut mortality, which will inform the different sectors of their estimated halibut mortality and allow specific sectors to respond with methods that could reduce mortality and, eventually, the DMR for that sector.

At the December 2019 meeting, the SSC, AP, and the Council concurred with the revised DMR estimation methodology, and NMFS adopts for 2020 and 2021 the DMRs calculated under the revised methodology, which uses an updated 2-year reference period. The final 2020 and 2021 DMRs in this rule are unchanged from the DMRs in the proposed 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications (84 FR 66109, December 3, 2019). Table 17 lists these final 2020 and 2021 DMRs.

TABLE 17—FINAL 2020 AND 2021 HALIBUT DISCARD MORTALITY RATES FOR VESSELS FISHING IN THE GULF OF ALASKA

[Values are percent of halibut assumed to be dead]

Gear	Sector	Groundfish fishery	Halibut discard mortality rate (percent)
Pelagic trawl	Catcher vessel	All	100
	Catcher/processor	All	100
Non-pelagic trawl	Catcher vessel	Rockfish Program	52
	Catcher vessel	All others	68
	Mothership and catcher/processor	All	75
Hook-and-line	Catcher/processor	All	11
	Catcher vessel	All	13
Pot	Catcher vessel and catcher/processor	All	0

Chinook Salmon Prohibited Species Catch Limits

Amendment 93 to the FMP (77 FR 42629, July 20, 2012) established separate Chinook salmon PSC limits in the Western and Central GOA in the directed pollock trawl fishery. These limits require that NMFS close the pollock directed fishery in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA if the applicable Chinook salmon PSC limit in that regulatory area is reached (§ 679.21(h)(8)). The annual Chinook salmon PSC limits in the pollock directed fishery of 6,684 salmon in the Western GOA and 18,316 salmon in the Central GOA are set at § 679.21(h)(2)(i) and (ii).

Amendment 97 to the FMP (79 FR 71350, December 2, 2014) established an initial annual PSC limit of 7,500 Chinook salmon for the trawl non-pollock groundfish fisheries in the Western and Central GOA. This limit is apportioned among three sectors directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock: 3,600 Chinook salmon to trawl C/Ps; 1,200 Chinook salmon to trawl CVs participating in the Rockfish Program; and 2,700 Chinook salmon to trawl CVs not participating in the Rockfish Program (§ 679.21(h)(4)). NMFS will monitor the Chinook salmon PSC in the trawl non-pollock groundfish fisheries and close an applicable sector if it reaches its Chinook salmon PSC limit.

The Chinook salmon PSC limit for two sectors, trawl C/Ps and trawl CVs not participating in the Rockfish Program, may be increased in subsequent years based on the performance of these two sectors and their ability to minimize their use of their respective Chinook salmon PSC limits. If either or both of these two sectors limits its use of Chinook salmon PSC to a specified threshold amount in 2019 (3,120 for trawl C/Ps and 2,340 for Non-Rockfish Program trawl CVs), that sector will receive an incremental increase to its 2020 Chinook salmon PSC limit (§ 679.21(h)(4)). In 2019, the trawl C/P sector did not exceed 3,120 Chinook salmon PSC; therefore, the 2020 trawl C/P sector Chinook salmon PSC limit will be 4,080 Chinook salmon. In 2019, the Non-Rockfish Program trawl CV sector did exceed 2,340 Chinook salmon PSC; therefore, the 2020 Non-Rockfish Program trawl CV sector Chinook salmon PSC limit will be 2,700 Chinook salmon.

American Fisheries Act (AFA) Catcher/Processor and Catcher Vessel Groundfish Harvest and PSC Limits

Section 679.64 establishes groundfish harvesting and processing sideboard limitations on AFA C/Ps and CVs in the GOA. These sideboard limits are necessary to protect the interests of fishermen and processors who do not directly benefit from the AFA from those fishermen and processors who receive exclusive harvesting and processing privileges under the AFA. Section 679.7(k)(1)(ii) prohibits listed AFA C/Ps and C/Ps designated on a listed AFA C/P permit from harvesting any species of groundfish in the GOA. Additionally, § 679.7(k)(1)(iv) prohibits listed AFA C/Ps and C/Ps designated on a listed AFA C/P permit from processing any pollock harvested in a directed pollock fishery in the GOA and any groundfish harvested in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

AFA CVs that are less than 125 feet (38.1 meters) length overall, have annual landings of pollock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands less than 5,100 mt, and have made at least 40 GOA groundfish landings from 1995 through 1997 are exempt from GOA CV groundfish sideboard limits under § 679.64(b)(2)(ii). Sideboard limits for non-exempt AFA CVs in the GOA are based on their traditional harvest levels of TAC in groundfish fisheries covered by the FMP. Section 679.64(b)(3)(iv) establishes the CV groundfish sideboard limitations in the GOA based on the aggregate retained catch of non-exempt AFA CVs of each sideboard species or species group from 1995 through 1997 divided by the sum of the TACs for that species or species group available to CVs over the same period.

As discussed earlier in this preamble, NMFS published a final rule (84 FR 2723, February 8, 2019) that establishes regulations to prohibit directed fishing for specific groundfish species or species groups subject to sideboard limits, rather than prohibiting directed fishing for non-exempt AFA CV sideboards through the GOA annual harvest specifications. Those groundfish species or species groups with sideboard limits subject to the final rule are now prohibited to directed fishing in regulation (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iv)(D) and Table 56 to 50 CFR part 679). Beginning with the 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications, NMFS is incorporating these changes into the specification and management of non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limits and will continue to publish only those sideboard limit amounts for groundfish species or species groups not subject to the final rule. This decreases the overall number of sideboard limits specified in the GOA harvest specifications, compared to previous years.

Tables 18 and 19 list the final 2020 and 2021 groundfish sideboard limits for non-exempt AFA CVs. NMFS will deduct all targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species made by non-exempt AFA CVs from the sideboard limits listed in Tables 18 and 19.

TABLE 18—FINAL 2020 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments by season/gear	Area/component	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995–1997 TAC	Final 2020 TACs [3]	Final 2020 non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limit
Pollock	A Season	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	517	313
	January 20–March 10	Chirikof (620)	0.1167	18,757	2,189
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	5,783	1,173
	B Season	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	517	313
	March 10–May 31	Chirikof (620)	0.1167	22,222	2,593
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	2,318	470
	C Season	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	9,070	5,485
	August 25–October 1	Chirikof (620)	0.1167	6,739	786
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	9,248	1,875
	D Season	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	9,070	5,485
	October 1–November 1	Chirikof (620)	0.1167	6,739	786
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	9,248	1,875
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.3495	5,554	1,941
		SEO (650)	0.3495	10,148	3,547
Pacific cod	A Season [1]	W	0.1331	1,246	166
	January 1–June 10	C	0.0692	2,284	158
	B Season [2]	W	0.1331	830	111
	September 1–December 31	C	0.0692	1,522	105
Flatfish, shallow-water	Annual	W	0.0156	13,250	207
		C	0.0587	27,732	1,628
Flatfish, deep-water	Annual	W	0.0647	226	
		C	0.0128	1,948	126
Rex sole	Annual	C	0.0384	8,579	329
Arrowtooth flounder	Annual	C	0.0280	68,669	1,923
Flathead sole	Annual	C	0.0213	15,400	328
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	C	0.0748	23,678	1,771
		E	0.0466	6,123	285
Northern rockfish	Annual	C	0.0277	3,178	88

[1] The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.
[2] The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.
[3] The Western and Central GOA and WYK District area apportionments of pollock are considered ACLs.

TABLE 19—FINAL 2021 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments by season/gear	Area/component	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995–1997 TAC	Final 2021 TACs [3]	Final 2021 non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limit
Pollock	A Season—January 20–March 10	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	533	322
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	19,344	2,257
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	5,964	1,209
	B Season—March 10–May 31	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	533	322

TABLE 19—FINAL 2021 GOA NON-EXEMPT AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CATCHER VESSEL (CV) GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS—Continued

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments by season/gear	Area/component	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV catch to 1995–1997 TAC	Final 2021 TACs [3]	Final 2021 non-exempt AFA CV sideboard limit
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	22,917	2,674
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	2,391	485
	C Season—August 25–October 1	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	9,354	5,656
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	6,950	811
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	9,537	1,934
	D Season—October 1–November 1	Shumagin (610)	0.6047	9,354	5,656
		Chirikof (620)	0.1167	6,950	811
		Kodiak (630)	0.2028	9,537	1,934
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.3495	5,728	2,002
		SEO (650)	0.3495	10,148	3,547
Pacific cod	A Season [1]—January 1–June 10	W	0.1331	1,246	166
		C	0.0692	2,284	158
	B Season [2]—September 1–December 31	W	0.1331	830	111
		C	0.0692	1,522	105
Flatfish, shallow-water	Annual	W	0.0156	13,250	207
		C	0.0587	28,205	1,656
Flatfish, deep-water	Annual	C	0.0647	1,914	124
		E	0.0128	3,787	48
Rex sole	Annual	C	0.0384	8,912	342
Arrowtooth flounder	Annual	C	0.0280	66,683	1,867
Flathead sole	Annual	C	0.0213	15,400	328
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	C	0.0748	22,727	1,700
	Annual	E	0.0466	5,877	274
Northern rockfish	Annual	C	0.0277	3,027	84

[1] The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.
[2] The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.
[3] The Western and Central GOA and WYK District area apportionments of pollock are considered ACLs.

Non-Exempt AFA Catcher Vessel Halibut PSC Limits

The halibut PSC sideboard limits for non-exempt AFA CVs in the GOA are based on the aggregate retained groundfish catch by non-exempt AFA CVs in each PSC target category from 1995 through 1997 divided by the retained catch of all vessels in that fishery from 1995 through 1997 (§ 679.64(b)(4)(ii)). Table 20 lists the final 2020 and 2021 non-exempt AFA CV halibut PSC limits for vessels using trawl gear in the GOA.

TABLE 20—FINAL 2020 AND 2021 NON-EXEMPT AFA CV HALIBUT PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH (PSC) SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR VESSELS USING TRAWL GEAR IN THE GOA

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Season	Season dates	Target fishery	Ratio of 1995–1997 non-exempt AFA CV retained catch to total retained catch	2020 and 2021 PSC limit	2020 and 2021 non-exempt AFA CV PSC limit
1	January 20–April 1	shallow-water	0.340	384	131
		deep-water	0.070	135	9
2	April 1–July 1	shallow-water	0.340	85	29
		deep-water	0.070	256	18
3	July 1–August 1	shallow-water	0.340	121	41
		deep-water	0.070	341	24
4	August 1–October 1	shallow-water	0.340	53	18
		deep-water	0.070	75	5
5	October 1–December 31	all targets	0.205	256	52
Annual		Total shallow-water			219
		Total deep-water			56
		Total, all season and categories		1,706	328

Non-AFA Crab Vessel Groundfish Harvest Limitations

Section 680.22 establishes groundfish catch limits for vessels with a history of participation in the Bering Sea snow crab fishery to prevent these vessels from using the increased flexibility provided by the Crab Rationalization (CR) Program to expand their level of participation in the GOA groundfish fisheries. Sideboard limits restrict these vessels' catch to their collective

historical landings in each GOA groundfish fishery (except the fixed-gear sablefish fishery). Sideboard limits also apply to catch made using an LLP license derived from the history of a restricted vessel, even if that LLP license is used on another vessel.

The basis for these sideboard limits is described in detail in the final rules implementing the major provisions of the CR Program, including Amendments 18 and 19 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (Crab FMP) (70 FR 10174, March 2, 2005), Amendment 34 to the Crab FMP (76 FR 35772, June 20, 2011), Amendment 83 to the GOA FMP (76 FR 74670, December 1, 2011), and Amendment 45 to the Crab FMP (80 FR 28539, May 19, 2015).

As discussed earlier in this preamble, NMFS published a final rule (84 FR 2723, February 8, 2019) that establishes regulations to prohibit directed fishing for specific groundfish species or species groups subject to sideboard limits, rather than prohibiting directed fishing for non-AFA crab vessel sideboards through the GOA annual harvest specifications. Those groundfish species or species groups with sideboard limits subject to the final rule are now prohibited to directed fishing in regulation (§ 680.22(e)(1)(i) and (iii)). Beginning with the 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications, NMFS is incorporating such changes into the specification and the management of non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limits and will continue to publish only those non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit amounts for groundfish species not subject to the final rule. This decreases the overall number of sideboard limits specified in the GOA harvest specifications, compared to previous years.

Tables 21 and 22 list the final 2020 and 2021 groundfish sideboard limitations for non-AFA crab vessels. All targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species made by non-AFA crab vessels or associated LLP licenses will be deducted from these sideboard limits.

TABLE 21—FINAL 2020 GOA NON-AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Season/gear	Area/component/gear	Ratio of 1996–2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	Final 2020 TACs	Final 2020 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit
Pacific cod	A Season	Western Pot CV	0.0997	1,246	124
	January 1–June 10	Central Pot CV	0.0474	2,284	108
	B Season	Western Pot CV	0.0997	830	83
	September 1–December 31	Central Pot CV	0.0474	1,522	72

TABLE 22—FINAL 2021 GOA NON-AMERICAN FISHERIES ACT CRAB VESSEL GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Species	Season/gear	Area/component/gear	Ratio of 1996–2000 non-AFA crab vessel catch to 1996–2000 total harvest	Final 2021 TACs	Final 2021 non-AFA crab vessel sideboard limit
Pacific cod	A Season	Western Pot CV	0.0997	1,246	124
	January 1–June 10	Central Pot CV	0.0474	2,284	108
	B Season	Western Pot CV	0.0997	830	83
	September 1–December 31	Central Pot CV	0.0474	1,522	72

Rockfish Program Groundfish Sideboard and Halibut PSC Limitations

The Rockfish Program establishes three classes of sideboard provisions: CV groundfish sideboard restrictions, C/P rockfish sideboard restrictions, and C/P opt-out vessel sideboard restrictions (§ 679.82(c)(1)). These sideboards are intended to limit the ability of rockfish harvesters to expand into other GOA groundfish fisheries.

CVs participating in the Rockfish Program may not participate in directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the West Yakutat District and Western GOA from July 1 through July 31. Also, CVs may not participate in directed fishing for arrowtooth flounder, deep-water flatfish, and rex sole in the GOA from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(d)).

C/Ps participating in Rockfish Program cooperatives are restricted by rockfish and halibut PSC sideboard limits. These C/Ps are prohibited from directed fishing for dusky rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, and northern rockfish in the West Yakutat District and Western GOA from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(e)(2)). Holders of C/P-designated LLP licenses that opt out of participating in a Rockfish Program cooperative will be able to access that portion of each rockfish sideboard limit that is not assigned to rockfish cooperatives (§ 679.82 (e)(7)). The sideboard ratio for each fishery in the West Yakutat District and the Western GOA is set forth in § 679.82(e)(4). Tables 23 and 24 list the final 2020 and 2021 Rockfish Program C/P sideboard limits in the West Yakutat District and the Western GOA. Due to confidentiality requirements associated with fisheries data, the sideboard limits for the West Yakutat District are not displayed.

TABLE 23—FINAL 2020 ROCKFISH PROGRAM SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR THE WESTERN GOA AND WEST YAKUTAT DISTRICT BY FISHERY FOR THE CATCHER/PROCESSOR SECTOR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area	Fishery	C/P sector (% of TAC)	Final 2020 TACs	Final 2020 C/P limit
Western GOA	Dusky rockfish	72.3	776	561.
	Pacific ocean perch	50.6	1,437	727.
	Northern rockfish	74.3	1,133	884.
West Yakutat District	Dusky rockfish	Confidential [1]	115	Confidential.[1]
	Pacific ocean perch	Confidential [1]	1,470	Confidential.[1]

[1] Not released due to confidentiality requirements associated with fish ticket data, as established by NMFS and the State of Alaska.

TABLE 24—FINAL 2021 ROCKFISH PROGRAM SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR THE WESTERN GOA AND WEST YAKUTAT DISTRICT BY FISHERY FOR THE CATCHER/PROCESSOR SECTOR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Area	Fishery	C/P sector (% of TAC)	Final 2021 TACs	Final 2021 C/P limit
Western GOA	Dusky rockfish	72.3	759	549.
	Pacific ocean perch	50.6	1,379	698.
	Northern rockfish	74.3	1,079	802.
West Yakutat District	Dusky rockfish	Confidential [1]	113	Confidential.[1]
	Pacific ocean perch	Confidential [1]	1,410	Confidential.[1]

[1] Not released due to confidentiality requirements associated with fish ticket data, as established by NMFS and the State of Alaska.

Under the Rockfish Program, the C/P sector is subject to halibut PSC sideboard limits for the trawl deep-water and shallow-water species fisheries from July 1 through July 31 (§ 679.82(e)(3) and (5)). Halibut PSC sideboard ratios by fishery are set forth in § 679.82(e)(5). No halibut PSC sideboard limits apply to the CV sector, as CVs participating in cooperatives receive a portion of the annual halibut PSC limit. C/Ps that opt out of the Rockfish Program are able to access that portion of the deep-water and shallow-water halibut PSC sideboard limit not assigned to C/P rockfish cooperatives. The sideboard provisions for C/Ps that elect to opt out of participating in a rockfish cooperative are described in § 679.82(c), (e), and (f). Sideboard limits are linked to the catch history of specific vessels that may choose to opt out. After March 1, NMFS will determine which C/Ps have opted-out of the Rockfish Program in 2020, and NMFS will know the ratios and amounts used to calculate opt-out sideboard ratios. NMFS will then calculate any applicable opt-out sideboards for 2020 and post these limits on the Alaska Region website at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/sustainable-fisheries/alaska-fisheries-management-reports#central-goa-rockfish.* Table 25 lists the final 2020 and 2021 Rockfish Program halibut PSC sideboard limits for the C/P sector.

TABLE 25—FINAL 2020 AND 2021 ROCKFISH PROGRAM HALIBUT PSC SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR THE CATCHER/PROCESSOR SECTOR

[Values are rounded to the nearest metric ton]

Sector	Shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	Deep-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard ratio (percent)	2020 and 2021 halibut mortality limit (mt)	Annual shallow-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)	Annual deep-water species fishery halibut PSC sideboard limit (mt)
Catcher/processor	0.10	2.50	1,706	2	43

Amendment 80 Program Groundfish and PSC Sideboard Limits

Amendment 80 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (Amendment 80 Program) established a limited access privilege program for the non-AFA trawl C/P sector. The Amendment 80 Program established groundfish and halibut PSC catch limits for Amendment 80 Program participants to limit the ability of participants eligible for the Amendment 80 Program to expand their harvest efforts in the GOA.

Section 679.92 establishes groundfish harvesting sideboard limits on all Amendment 80 program vessels, other than the F/V *Golden Fleece,* to amounts no greater than the limits listed in Table 37 to 50 CFR part 679. Under § 679.92(d), the F/V *Golden Fleece* is prohibited from directed fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, Pacific ocean perch, dusky rockfish, and northern rockfish in the GOA.

Groundfish sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels operating in the GOA are based on their average aggregate harvests from 1998 through 2004 (72 FR 52668, September 14, 2007). Tables 26 and 27 list the final 2020 and 2021 groundfish sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels. NMFS will deduct all targeted or incidental catch of sideboard species

made by Amendment 80 Program vessels from the sideboard limits in Tables 26 and 27.

TABLE 26—FINAL 2020 GOA GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR AMENDMENT 80 PROGRAM VESSELS

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by season	Area	Ratio of Amendment 80 sector vessels 1998–2004 catch to TAC	2020 TAC (mt)	2020 Amendment 80 vessel sideboards (mt)
Pollock	A Season	Shumagin (610)	0.003	517	2
	January 20–March 10	Chirikof (620)	0.002	18,757	38
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	5,783	12
	B Season	Shumagin (610)	0.003	517	2
	March 10–May 31	Chirikof (620)	0.002	22,222	44
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	2,318	5
	C Season	Shumagin (610)	0.003	9,070	27
	August 25–October 1	Chirikof (620)	0.002	6,739	13
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	9,248	18
	D Season	Shumagin (610)	0.003	9,070	27
	October 1–November 1	Chirikof (620)	0.002	6,739	13
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	9,248	18
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.002	5,554	11
Pacific cod	A Season [1]	W	0.020	1,246	25
	January 1–June 10	C	0.044	2,284	100
	B Season [2]	W	0.020	830	17
	September 1–December 31	C	0.044	1,522	67
	Annual	WYK	0.034	549	19
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.994	1,437	1,428
		WYK	0.961	1,470	1,413
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	1.000	1,133	1,133
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.764	776	593
		WYK	0.896	115	103

[1] The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.
[2] The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

TABLE 27—FINAL 2021 GOA GROUNDFISH SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR AMENDMENT 80 PROGRAM VESSELS

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Species	Apportionments and allocations by season	Area	Ratio of Amendment 80 sector vessels 1998–2004 catch to TAC	2021 TAC (mt)	2021 Amendment 80 vessel sideboards (mt)
Pollock	A Season	Shumagin (610)	0.003	533	2
	January 20–March 10	Chirikof (620)	0.002	19,344	39
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	5,964	12
	B Season	Shumagin (610)	0.003	533	2
	March 10–May 31	Chirikof (620)	0.002	22,917	46
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	2,391	5
	C Season	Shumagin (610)	0.003	9,354	28
	August 25–October 1	Chirikof (620)	0.002	6,950	14
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	9,537	19
	D Season	Shumagin (610)	0.003	9,354	28
	October 1–November 1	Chirikof (620)	0.002	6,950	14
		Kodiak (630)	0.002	9,537	19
	Annual	WYK (640)	0.002	5,728	11
Pacific cod	A Season [1]	W	0.020	1,246	25
	January 1–June 10	C	0.044	2,284	100
	B Season [2]	W	0.020	830	17
	September 1–December 31	C	0.044	1,522	67
	Annual	WYK	0.034	549	19
Pacific ocean perch	Annual	W	0.994	1,379	1,371
		WYK	0.961	1,410	1,355
Northern rockfish	Annual	W	1.000	1,079	1,079
Dusky rockfish	Annual	W	0.764	759	580
		WYK	0.896	113	101

[1] The Pacific cod A season for trawl gear does not open until January 20.
[2] The Pacific cod B season for trawl gear closes November 1.

The halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels in the GOA are based on the historic use of halibut PSC by Amendment 80 Program vessels in each PSC target category from 1998 through 2004. These values are slightly lower than the average historic use to accommodate two factors: Allocation of halibut PSC cooperative quota under the Rockfish Program and the exemption of the F/V *Golden Fleece* from this restriction (§ 679.92(b)(2)). Table 28 lists the final 2020 and 2021 halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 Program vessels. These tables incorporate the maximum percentages of the halibut PSC sideboard limits that may be used by Amendment 80 Program vessels as contained in Table 38 to 50 CFR part 679. Any residual amount of a seasonal Amendment 80 halibut PSC sideboard limit may carry forward to the next season limit (§ 679.92(b)(2)).

TABLE 28—FINAL 2020 AND 2021 HALIBUT PSC SIDEBOARD LIMITS FOR AMENDMENT 80 PROGRAM VESSELS IN THE GOA

[Values are rounded to nearest metric ton]

Season	Season dates	Target fishery	Historic Amendment 80 use of the annual halibut PSC limit catch (ratio)	2020 and 2021 annual PSC limit (mt)	2020 and 2021 Amendment 80 vessel PSC limit
1	January 20–April 1	shallow-water	0.0048	1,706	8
		deep-water	0.0115	1,706	20
2	April 1–July 1	shallow-water	0.0189	1,706	32
		deep-water	0.1072	1,706	183
3	July 1–August 1	shallow-water	0.0146	1,706	25
		deep-water	0.0521	1,706	89
4	August 1–October 1	shallow-water	0.0074	1,706	13
		deep-water	0.0014	1,706	2
5	October 1–December 31	shallow-water	0.0227	1,706	39
		deep-water	0.0371	1,706	63
Total					474

Directed Fishing Closures

Pursuant to § 679.20(d)(1)(i), if the Regional Administrator determines 1) that any allocation or apportionment of a target species or species group allocated or apportioned to a fishery will be reached; or 2) with respect to pollock and Pacific cod, that an allocation or apportionment to an inshore or offshore component or sector allocation will be reached, then the Regional Administrator may establish a directed fishing allowance (DFA) for that species or species group. If the Regional Administrator establishes a DFA and that allowance is or will be reached before the end of the fishing season or year, NMFS will prohibit directed fishing for that species or species group in the specified GOA subarea, regulatory area, or district (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iii)).

The Regional Administrator has determined that the TACs for the species listed in Table 29 are necessary to account for the incidental catch of these species in other anticipated groundfish fisheries for the 2020 and 2021 fishing years.

TABLE 29—2020 AND 2021 DIRECTED FISHING CLOSURES IN THE GOA

[Amounts for incidental catch in other directed fisheries are in metric tons]

Target	Area/component/gear	Incidental catch amount and year (if amounts differ by year)
Pollock	all/offshore	not applicable[1].
Sablefish[2]	all/trawl	1,978 (2020), 3,058 (2021).
Pacific cod[3]	Western, all sectors, all gear types Central, all sectors, all gear types Eastern, inshore and offshore.	See Tables 5 and 6 of this final rule for incidental catch amounts.
Shortraker rockfish[2]	All	708.
Rougheye/blackspotted rockfish[2]	All	1,209 (2020), 1,211 (2021).
Thornyhead rockfish[2]	All	2,016.
Other rockfish	All	4,053.
Atka mackerel	All	3,000.
Big skate	All	3,208.
Longnose skate	All	2,587.
Other skates	All	875.
Sharks	All	8,184.
Octopuses	All	980.

[1] Pollock is closed to directed fishing in the GOA by the offshore component under § 679.20(a)(6)(i).

[2] Closures not applicable to participants in cooperatives conducted under the Central GOA Rockfish Program, as cooperatives are prohibited from exceeding their allocations (§ 679.7(n)(6)(viii)).

[3] NMFS prohibited directed fishing for Pacific cod in the GOA on January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020 (84 FR 70438, December 23, 2019).

Consequently, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator establishes the DFA for the species or species groups listed in Table 29 as zero mt. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for those species, areas, gear types, and components in the GOA listed in Table 29 effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 10, 2020, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2021.

Closures implemented under the 2019 and 2020 GOA harvest specifications for groundfish (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019) remain effective under authority of these final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications and until the date specified in those notices. Closures are posted at the following website under the Alaska filter for Management Areas: *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/rules-and-announcements/bulletins.*

While these closures are in effect, the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a fishing trip. These closures to directed fishing are in addition to closures and prohibitions found at 50 CFR part 679. NMFS may implement other closures during the 2020 and 2021 fishing years as necessary for effective conservation and management.

Comments and Responses

NMFS received two letters containing two substantive comments during the public comment period for the proposed GOA groundfish harvest specifications. No changes were made to the final rule in response to the comment letters received. NMFS's response to public comments on the proposed GOA groundfish harvest specifications is provided below.

Comment 1: The allowable harvest of groundfish species in the GOA should be reduced by 50 percent to avoid exploiting the fisheries resources of the GOA and to account for the marine animals that rely on fish.

Response: Pursuant to National Standard One of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, NMFS must achieve, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery for the U.S. fishing industry (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(1)). Under the FMP and implementing regulations, the optimum yield for the GOA groundfish fisheries ranges from 116,000 to 800,000 mt. Based on the best available science, the Council determined that the optimum yield for 2020 and 2021 is 399,239 mt and 407,982 mt, respectively, and recommended TACs to achieve this optimum yield. NMFS agrees with this recommendation. Reducing the harvest of all groundfish by 50 percent would not achieve optimum yield for the GOA groundfish fisheries, and would not comply with National Standard One. Moreover, NMFS's primary objective in the harvest specifications process is the conservation and management of groundfish for the Nation as a whole, and the annual harvest specifications process is a key element to ensuring that Alaska fisheries are sustainably managed in a controlled and orderly manner. This process incorporates the best available scientific information from the most recent SAFE reports, which includes information on the condition of each groundfish species, as well as the condition of other ecosystem components, including marine mammals and seabirds. The recommended TACs for species and species groups in the GOA are based on the most recent SAFE report, and none of the NMFS-managed groundfish species in the GOA is overfished or subject to overfishing. In addition, NMFS has considered impacts on endangered and threatened species and marine mammals and has developed measures to address those impacts.

Comment 2: NMFS should prohibit commercial fishing, and only allow subsistence fishing, in the GOA.

Response: The groundfish harvest specifications regulations that implement the FMP govern commercial fishing for groundfish in the GOA by vessels of the United States. The groundfish harvest specifications are for commercial fishing activities. Non-commercial fishing activities, including subsistence fishing, are outside of the scope of this action.

Classification

NMFS has determined that the final harvest specifications are consistent with the FMP and with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and other applicable laws.

This action is authorized under 50 CFR 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

NMFS prepared an EIS for the Alaska groundfish harvest specifications and alternative harvest strategies (see **ADDRESSES**) and made it available to the public on January 12, 2007 (72 FR 1512). On February 13, 2007, NMFS issued the ROD for the EIS. In January 2020, NMFS prepared a SIR for this action. Copies of the EIS, ROD, and annual SIRs for this action are available from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**). The Final EIS analyzes the environmental, social, and economic consequences of the groundfish harvest specifications and alternative harvest strategies on resources in the action area. Based on the analysis in the Final EIS, NMFS concluded that the preferred Alternative (Alternative 2) provides the best balance among relevant environmental, social, and economic considerations and allows for continued management of the groundfish fisheries based on the most recent, best scientific information. The preferred alternative is a harvest strategy in which TACs are set at a level within the range of ABCs recommended by the Council's SSC; the sum of the TACs must achieve the OY specified in the FMP.

The annual SIR evaluates the need to prepare a Supplemental EIS (SEIS) for the 2020 and 2021 groundfish harvest specifications. An SEIS should be prepared if (1) the agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns, or (2) significant new circumstances or information exist relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts (40 CFR 1502.9(c)(1)). After reviewing the information contained in the SIR and SAFE reports, the Regional Administrator has determined that (1) approval of the 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications, which were set according to the preferred harvest strategy in the EIS, does not constitute a substantial change in the action; and (2) there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the action or its impacts. Additionally, the 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications will result in environmental, social, and economic impacts within the scope of those analyzed and disclosed in the EIS. Therefore, an SEIS is not necessary to implement the 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications.

Section 604 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) (5 U.S.C. 604) requires that, when an agency promulgates a final rule under 5 U.S.C. 553, after being required by that section, or any other law, to publish a general notice of proposed rulemaking, the agency shall prepare a final regulatory flexibility analysis (FRFA). The following constitutes the FRFA prepared in the final action.

Section 604 describes the required contents of a FRFA: (1) A statement of the need for, and objectives of, the rule; (2) a statement of the significant issues raised by the public comments in response to the initial regulatory flexibility analysis, a statement of the assessment of the agency of such issues, and a statement of any changes made in the proposed rule as a result of such comments; (3) the response of the agency to any comments filed by the

Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration in response to the proposed rule, and a detailed statement of any change made to the proposed rule in the final rule as a result of the comments; (4) a description of and an estimate of the number of small entities to which the rule will apply or an explanation of why no such estimate is available; (5) a description of the projected reporting, recordkeeping, and other compliance requirements of the rule, including an estimate of the classes of small entities which will be subject to the requirement and the type of professional skills necessary for preparation of the report or record; and (6) a description of the steps the agency has taken to minimize the significant economic impact on small entities consistent with the stated objectives of applicable statutes, including a statement of the factual, policy, and legal reasons for selecting the alternative adopted in the final rule and why each one of the other significant alternatives to the rule considered by the agency that affect the impact on small entities was rejected.

A description of this action, its purpose, and its legal basis are contained at the beginning of the preamble to this final rule and are not repeated here.

NMFS published the proposed rule on December 3, 2019 (84 FR 66109). NMFS prepared an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) to accompany the proposed action, and included a summary in the proposed rule. The comment period closed on January 2, 2020. No comments were received on the IRFA or on the economic impacts of the rule more generally. The Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration did not file any comments on the proposed rule.

The entities directly regulated by this action include: (1) Entities operating vessels with groundfish FFPs catching FMP groundfish in Federal waters; (2) all entities operating vessels, regardless of whether they hold groundfish FFPs, catching FMP groundfish in the State-waters parallel fisheries; and (3) all entities operating vessels fishing for halibut inside three miles of the shore (whether or not they have FFPs).

For RFA purposes only, NMFS has established a small business size standard for businesses, including their affiliates, whose primary industry is commercial fishing (see 50 CFR 200.2). A business primarily engaged in commercial fishing (NAICS code 11411) is classified as a small business if it is independently owned and operated, is not dominant in its field of operation (including its affiliates), and has combined annual gross receipts not in excess of $11 million for all its affiliated operations worldwide.

Using the most recent data available (2018), the estimated number of directly regulated small entities include approximately 756 individual catcher vessel entities with gross revenues meeting small entity criteria. Of these entities, 706 used hook-and-line gear, 74 used pot gear, and 28 used trawl gear (some of these entities used more than one gear type, thus the counts of entities using the different gear types do not sum to the total number of entities above). Three individual catcher/processors met the small entity criterion; two used hook-and-line gear, and one used trawl gear. Catcher/processor gross revenues were not reported for confidentiality reasons; however, in 2018, small hook-and-line entities had average gross revenues of $390,000, small pot entities had average gross revenues of $870,000, and small trawl entities had average gross revenues of $2 million.

Some of these vessels are members of AFA inshore pollock cooperatives, of GOA rockfish cooperatives, or of Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab rationalization cooperatives, and, therefore, under the RFA it is the aggregate gross receipts of all participating members of the cooperative that must meet the threshold. Vessels that participate in these cooperatives are considered to be large entities within the meaning of the RFA. These relationships are accounted for, along with corporate affiliations among vessels, to the extent that they are known, in the estimated number of small entities. If affiliations exist of which NMFS is unaware, or if entities had non-fishing revenue sources, the estimates above may overstate the number of directly regulated small entities.

This action does not modify recordkeeping or reporting requirements.

NMFS considered alternative harvest strategies when choosing the preferred harvest strategy (Alternative 2) in December 2006. These included the following:

- Alternative 1: Set TACs to produce fishing mortality rates, *F,* that are equal to *maxFABC,* unless the sum of the TACs is constrained by the OY established in the FMP. This is equivalent to setting TACs to produce harvest levels equal to the maximum permissible ABCs, as constrained by OY. The term ''*maxFABC*'' refers to the maximum permissible value of *FABC* under Amendment 56 to the GOA groundfish fishery management plan. Historically, the TAC has been set at or below the ABC; therefore, this alternative represents a likely upper limit for setting the TAC within the OY and ABC limits.
- Alternative 3: For species in Tiers 1, 2, and 3, set TAC to produce *F* equal to the most recent 5-year average actual *F.* For species in Tiers 4, 5, and 6, set TAC equal to the most recent 5-year average actual catch. For stocks with a high level of scientific information, TACs would be set to produce harvest levels equal to the most recent 5-year average actual fishing mortality rates. For stocks with insufficient scientific information, TACs would be set equal to the most recent 5-year average actual catch. This alternative recognizes that for some stocks, catches may fall well below ABCs, and recent average *F* may provide a better indicator of actual *F* than *FABC* does.
- Alternative 4: First, set TACs for rockfish species in Tier 3 at *F*75%; set TACs for rockfish species in Tier 5 at *F*=0.5M; and set spatially explicit TACs for shortraker and rougheye/blackspotted rockfish in the GOA. Second, taking the rockfish TACs as calculated above, reduce all other TACs by a proportion that does not vary across species, so that the sum of all TACs, including rockfish TACs, is equal to the lower bound of the area OY (116,000 mt in the GOA). This alternative sets conservative and spatially explicit TACs for rockfish species that are long-lived and late to mature and sets conservative TACs for the other groundfish species.
- Alternative 5: (No Action) Set TACs at zero.

Alternatives 1, 3, 4, and 5 do not meet the objectives of this action, and although Alternatives 1 and 3 may have a smaller adverse economic impact on small entities than the preferred alternative, Alternatives 4 and 5 would have a significant adverse economic impact on small entities. The Council rejected these alternatives as harvest strategies in 2006, and the Secretary of Commerce did so in 2007.

Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative chosen by the Council: Set TACs that fall within the range of ABCs recommended through the Council harvest specifications process and TACs recommended by the Council. Under this scenario, *F* is set equal to a constant fraction of *maxFABC.* The recommended fractions of *maxFABC* may vary among species or stocks, based on other considerations unique to each. This is the method for determining TACs that has been used in the past.

Alternative 2 selected harvest rates that will allow fishermen to harvest stocks at the level of ABCs, unless total harvests are constrained by the upper bound of the GOA OY of 800,000 mt. The sums of ABCs in 2020 and 2021 are 465,956 mt and 471,990 mt, respectively. The sums of the TACs in 2020 and 2021 are 399,239 mt and 407,982 mt, respectively. Thus, although the sum of ABCs in each year is less than 800,000 mt, the sums of the TACs in each year are less than the sums of the ABCs.

In most cases, the Council has set TACs equal to ABCs. The divergence between aggregate TACs and aggregate ABCs reflects a variety of special species- and fishery-specific circumstances:

- Pacific cod TACs were first set equal to 70 percent in the Western GOA and 75 percent in the Central and Eastern GOA of the Pacific cod ABCs in each year to account for the GHL set by the State for its GHL Pacific cod fisheries (30 percent of the Western GOA ABC and 25 percent of the Central and Eastern GOA ABCs). In addition, the Council recommended and NMFS agrees to further reduce the 2020 and 2021 Pacific cod TACs in light of the current status of the Pacific cod stock.
- Shallow-water flatfish Western Regulatory Area and flathead sole Central and Western Regulatory Area TACs are set below ABCs. Arrowtooth flounder TACs are set below ABC in all GOA regulatory areas, except the Central GOA. Catches of these flatfish species rarely, if ever, approach the proposed ABCs or TACs. Important trawl fisheries in the GOA take halibut PSC, and are constrained by limits on the allowable halibut PSC mortality. These limits may force the closure of trawl fisheries before they have harvested the available groundfish ABC. Thus, actual harvests of groundfish in the GOA routinely fall short of some ABCs and TACs. Markets can also constrain harvests below the TACs, as has been the case with arrowtooth flounder, in the past. These TACs are set to allow for increased harvest opportunities for these targets while conserving the halibut PSC limit for use in other, more fully utilized fisheries.
- The GOA-wide Atka mackerel TAC is set below the ABC. The current estimates of survey biomass continue to be unreliable in the GOA. Therefore, the Council recommended and NMFS agrees that the Atka mackerel TAC in the GOA be set at an amount to support incidental catch in other directed fisheries.

Alternative 1 selects harvest rates that would allow fishermen to harvest stocks at the level of the ABCs, unless total harvests were constrained by the upper bound of the GOA OY of 800,000 mt. Although Alternative 1 may be consistent with the preferred alternative (Alternative 2), meet the objectives of the action, and have small entity impacts equivalent to the preferred alternative, it is not likely that Alternative 1 would result in reduced adverse economic impacts to directly-regulated small entities relative to Alternative 2. The selection of Alternative 1, which could increase all TACs up to the sum of ABCs, would not reflect the practical implications that increased TACs for some species probably would not be fully harvested. This could be due to a variety of reasons, which are addressed in the preamble to this rule and are summarized briefly here. There may be a lack of commercial or market interest in some species. Additionally, an underharvest of flatfish TACs could result due to constraints such as the fixed, and therefore constraining, PSC limits associated with the harvest of the GOA groundfish species. Finally, the TACs for two species (pollock and Pacific cod) cannot be set equal to ABC, as the TAC must be set to account for the State of Alaska's GHLs in these fisheries.

Alternative 3 selects harvest rates based on the most recent 5 years of harvest rates (for species in Tiers 1 through 3) or based on the most recent 5 years of harvests (for species in Tiers 4 through 6). This alternative is inconsistent with the objectives of this action because it does not take account of the most recent biological information for this fishery, as well as National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(2)). NMFS annually conducts at-sea surveys for different species, as well as statistical modeling, to estimate stock sizes and permissible harvest levels. Actual harvest rates or harvest amounts are a component of these estimates, but in and of themselves may not accurately portray stock sizes and conditions. Harvest rates are listed for each species or species group for each year in the SAFE report (see **ADDRESSES**).

Alternative 4 would lead to significantly lower harvests of all species to reduce TACs from the upper end of the OY range in the GOA to its lower end of 116,000 mt. Overall, this alternative would reduce 2020 TACs by about 71 percent, compared to the Council's recommended total 2020 TAC of 399,239 mt. This would lead to significant reductions in harvests of species by small entities. While production declines in the GOA likely would be associated with offsetting price increases in the GOA, the size of these increases is very uncertain. Price increases would still be constrained by the availability of substitutes, and there are close substitutes for GOA groundfish species available in significant quantities from the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area. In addition, price increases are very unlikely to offset revenue declines from smaller production. Thus, this action would have a detrimental economic impact on small entities, compared to the preferred alternative.

Alternative 5, which sets all harvests equal to zero, may also address conservation issues, but would have a significant adverse economic impact on small entities and would be inconsistent with achieving OY on a continuing basis, as mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(1)).

Adverse impacts on marine mammals, or endangered or threatened species, resulting from fishing activities conducted under this rule are discussed in the Final EIS and its accompanying annual SIRs (see **ADDRESSES**).

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness for this rule because delaying this rule is contrary to the public interest. The Plan Team review of the 2019 SAFE report occurred in November 2019, and based on the 2019 SAFE report the Council considered and recommended the final harvest specifications in December 2019. Accordingly, NMFS's review of the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications could not begin until after the December 2019 Council meeting, and after the public had time to comment on the proposed action.

For all fisheries not currently closed because the TACs established under the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019) were not reached, it is possible that they would be closed prior to the expiration of a 30-day delayed effectiveness period because their TACs could be reached within that period. If implemented immediately, this rule would allow these fisheries to continue fishing because some of the new TACs implemented by this rule are higher than the TACs under which they are currently fishing.

In addition, immediate effectiveness of this action is required to provide consistent management and conservation of fishery resources based on the best available scientific information. This is particularly pertinent for those species that have lower 2020 ABCs and TACs than those

established in the 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications (84 FR 9416, March 14, 2019). If implemented immediately, this rule would ensure that NMFS can properly manage those fisheries for which this rule sets lower 2020 ABCs and TACs, which are based on the most recent biological information on the condition of stocks, rather than managing species under the higher TACs set in the previous year's harvest specifications.

Certain fisheries, such as those for pollock, are intensive, fast-paced fisheries. Other fisheries, such as those for sablefish, flatfish, rockfish, Atka mackerel, skates, sharks, and octopuses, are critical as directed fisheries and as incidental catch in other fisheries. U.S. fishing vessels have demonstrated the capacity to catch the TAC allocations in many of these fisheries. If this rule allowed for a 30-day delay in effectiveness and if a TAC were reached during those 30 days, NMFS would close directed fishing or prohibit retention for the applicable species. Any delay in allocating the final TACs in these fisheries would cause confusion to the industry and potential economic harm through unnecessary discards, thus undermining the intent of this rule. Waiving the 30-day delay allows NMFS to prevent economic loss to fishermen that could otherwise occur should the 2020 TACs (set under the 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications) be reached. Determining which fisheries may close is nearly impossible because these fisheries are affected by several factors that cannot be predicted in advance, including fishing effort, weather, movement of fishery stocks, and market price. Furthermore, the closure of one fishery has a cascading effect on other fisheries by freeing-up fishing vessels, allowing them to move from closed fisheries to open ones, increasing the fishing capacity in those open fisheries, and causing them to close at an accelerated pace.

In fisheries subject to declining sideboard limits, a failure to implement the updated sideboard limits before initial season's end could deny the intended economic protection to the non-sideboarded sectors. Conversely, in fisheries with increasing sideboard limits, economic benefit could be denied to the sideboard-limited sectors.

If the final harvest specifications are not effective by March 14, 2020, which is the start of the 2020 Pacific halibut season as specified by the IPHC, the fixed gear sablefish fishery will not begin concurrently with the Pacific halibut IFQ season. This would result in confusion for the industry and economic harm from unnecessary discard of sablefish that are caught along with Pacific halibut, as both fixed gear sablefish and Pacific halibut are managed under the same IFQ program. Immediate effectiveness of the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications will allow the sablefish IFQ fishery to begin concurrently with the Pacific halibut IFQ season.

Finally, immediate effectiveness also would provide the fishing industry the earliest possible opportunity to plan and conduct its fishing operations with respect to new information about TACs. Therefore, NMFS finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

Small Entity Compliance Guide

This final rule is a plain language guide to assist small entities in complying with this final rule as required by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This final rule's primary purpose is to announce the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications and prohibited species bycatch allowances for the groundfish fisheries of the GOA. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits and associated management measures for groundfish during the 2020 and 2021 fishing years, and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the FMP. This action affects all fishermen who participate in the GOA fisheries. The specific OFL, ABC, TAC, and PSC amounts are provided in tables to assist the reader. NMFS will announce closures of directed fishing in the **Federal Register** and information bulletins released by the Alaska Region. Affected fishermen should keep themselves informed of such closures.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.;* 16 U.S.C. 1540 (f), 1801 *et seq.;* 16 U.S.C. 3631 *et seq.;* Pub. L. 105–277; Pub. L. 106–31; Pub. L. 106–554; Pub. L. 108–199; Pub. L. 108–447; Pub. L. 109–241; Pub. L. 109–479.

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