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[FR Doc. 02-18308 Filed 7-18-02; 8:45 am]
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 635

[I.D. 071202D]

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fisheries; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

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

ACTION: Adjustment of General category daily retention limit.

SUMMARY: NMFS has determined that the Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) General category daily catch limit should be adjusted in order to allow for maximum utilization of the proposed 2002 General category June through August subquota. Therefore, NMFS increases the daily retention limit from one to two large medium (73 to less than 81 inches (185 to less than 206 cm)) or giant (81 inches or greater (206 cm or greater)) BFT for the remainder of the June through August time-period.

DATES: Effective July 18 through August 31, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brad McHale, 978-281-9260.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations implemented under the authority of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*) and the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) governing the harvest of BFT by persons and vessels subject to U.S. jurisdiction are found at 50 CFR part 635. BFT fishing category quotas and General category effort controls (including time-period subquotas and Restricted-Fishing Days (RFDs)) are specified annually under §§ 635.23(a) and 635.27(a). The 2002 BFT quotas and General category effort controls were proposed June 25, 2002 (67 FR 43266, June 27, 2002).

Adjustment of Daily Retention Limit

Under § 635.23 (a)(4), NMFS may increase or decrease the daily retention limit of large medium and giant BFT over a range from zero (on RFDs) to a

maximum of three per vessel to allow for maximum utilization of the quota for BFT. Based on a review of dealer reports, daily landing trends, and the availability of BFT on the fishing grounds, NMFS has determined that an increase of the daily retention limit is appropriate and necessary to allow full use of the June through August subquota while ensuring an August fishery. Therefore, NMFS adjusts the daily retention limit for the remainder of the June through August subquota time-period to two large medium or giant BFT per vessel. This adjustment does not affect the proposed RFDs for August (August 10, 11, and 12), on which the daily retention in the General category would be zero, and on which General category vessels would not be allowed to fish for BFT.

The intent of this adjustment is to allow for maximum utilization of the June through August subquota (specified under §635.27(a)) by General category participants in order to help achieve optimum yield in the General category fishery, to collect a broad range of data for stock monitoring purposes, and to be consistent with the objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, and sharks.

While catch rates have been low so far this season, NMFS recognizes that they may increase. In addition, due to the temporal and geographical nature of the fishery, certain gear types and areas are more productive at various times during the fishery. In order to ensure that the June through August subquota is not filled prematurely and to ensure equitable fishing opportunities in all areas and for all gear types, NMFS has not waived the proposed RFDs in August, which correspond to market closures in Japan, and could promote better ex-vessel prices.

Classification

This action is taken under § 635.23(a)(4) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: July 15, 2002.

Virginia M. Fay,

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

[FR Doc. 02-18190 Filed 7-15-02; 4:10 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 020402077-01; I.D. 071202E]

Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; End of the Primary Season and Resumption of Trip Limits for the Shore-based Fishery for Pacific Whiting

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

ACTION: Fishing restrictions; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the end of the 2002 primary season for the shore-based fishery for Pacific whiting (whiting) at 0800 local time (l.t.) July 17, 2002, because the allocation is projected to be reached. This action is intended to keep the harvest of whiting at the 2002 allocation levels.

DATES: Effective from 0800 l.t. July 17, 2002, until the effective date of the 2003 specification and management measures for the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery which will be published in the **Federal Register**, unless modified, superseded or rescinded. Comments will be accepted through August 5, 2002.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments to D. Robert Lohn, Acting Administrator, Northwest Region (Regional Administrator), NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115-0070; or Rod McInnis, Acting Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Becky Renko at 206-526-6110.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This action is authorized by regulations implementing the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which governs the groundfish fishery off Washington, Oregon, and California. On April 15, 2002 (67 FR 18117), the levels of allowable biological catch, the optimum yield (OY) and the commercial OY (the OY minus the tribal allocation) for U.S. harvests of whiting were announced in the **Federal Register**. For 2002 the

whiting OY is 129,600 mt (mt) and the commercial OY is 106,920 mt.

Regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4) divide the commercial OY into separate allocations for the catcher/processor, mothership, and shore-based sectors of the whiting fishery. The 2002 allocations, which are based on the 2002 commercial OY, are 36,353 mt (34 percent) for the catcher/processor sector, 25,661 (24 percent) for the mothership sector, and 44,906 mt (42 percent) for the shoreside sector.

When each sector's allocation is reached, the primary season for that sector is ended. The shore-based sector is composed of vessels that harvest whiting for delivery to land-based processors. The regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(3)(i) describe the primary season for the shore-based sector as the period(s) when the large-scale target fishery is conducted (when trip limits under 50 CFR 660.323(b) are not in effect). Before and after the primary seasons, per-trip limits are in effect for whiting.

The best available information on July 15, 2002, indicates that 39,460 mt had been taken through July 13, 2002, and that the 44,906 mt shore-based allocation would be reached by 0800 l.t. July 17, 2002. This **Federal Register** document announces the date that the primary season for the shore-based sector ends, and that per-trip limits are reinstated. Per-trip limits are intended to accommodate small bait and fresh fish markets, and bycatch in other fisheries. To minimize incidental catch of chinook salmon by vessels fishing shoreward of the 100 fm (183 m) contour in the Eureka area, at any time during a fishing trip, a limit of 10,000-lb (4,536 kg) of whiting is in effect year-round, except when landings of whiting are prohibited.

On July 5, 2002 (67 FR 44778), NMFS announced fishery restrictions that eliminated the per-trip limits for whiting beginning September 1, 2002. Therefore, the 20,000-lb (9,072 kg) trip limit that was in place before the start of the primary season is reinstated from the end of the primary season to September 1, at which time further taking and retaining, possessing or landing of whiting will be prohibited, unless otherwise announced in the **Federal Register**.

NMFS Action

For the reasons stated above, and in accordance with the regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4)(iii)(C), NMFS herein announces:

Effective 0800 l.t. July 17, 2002, until September 1, 2002, no more than 20,000 lb (9,072 kg) of whiting may be taken

and retained, possessed or landed by a catcher vessel participating in the shore-based sector of the whiting fishery. On September 1, 2002, further taking and retaining, possessing or landing of whiting will be prohibited, unless otherwise announced in the **Federal Register**. If a vessel fishes shoreward of the 100-fm (183-m) contour in the Eureka area (43°–40°30' N. lat.) at any time during a fishing trip, the 10,000-lb (4,536-kg) trip limit applies, as announced in the annual management measures at paragraph IV, B (3)(c)(ii), except when the whiting fishery is closed.

Classification

This action is authorized by the regulations implementing the FMP. The determination to take this action is based on the most recent data available. The aggregate data upon which the determination is based are available for public inspection at the Office of the Regional Administrator (see **ADDRESSES**) during business hours. This action is taken under the authority of 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4)(iii)(C) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: July 15, 2002.

Virginia M. Fay

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

[FR Doc. 02-18262 Filed 7-16-02; 3:37 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 011218304-1304-01; I.D. 071502C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pelagic Shelf Rockfish in the West Yakutat District of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pelagic shelf rockfish in the West Yakutat District of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2002 total allowable catch (TAC) of pelagic shelf rockfish in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 16, 2002, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2002 TAC of pelagic shelf rockfish for the West Yakutat District was established as 640 metric tons (mt) by an emergency rule implementing 2002 harvest specifications and associated management measures for the groundfish fisheries off Alaska (67 FR 956, January 8, 2002 and 67 FR 34860, May 16, 2002).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2002 TAC for pelagic shelf rockfish in the West Yakutat District will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 630 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 10 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pelagic shelf rockfish in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is contrary to the public interest. This requirement is contrary to the public interest as it would delay the closure of the fishery, lead to exceeding the TAC, and therefore reduce the public's ability to use and enjoy the fishery resource.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, also finds good cause