

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 070817467–8554–02]

RIN 0648–XT87

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery; Closure of the Limited Access General Category Scallop Fishery to Individual Fishing Quota Scallop Vessels

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the Limited Access General Category (LAGC) Scallop Fishery is closed to individual fishing quota (IFQ) scallop vessels as of 0001 hr local time, January 18, 2010. This fishery will re-open on March 1, 2010. This action is based on the determination that the annual scallop total allowable catch (TAC) for LAGC IFQ scallop vessels (including vessels issued an IFQ letter of authorization (LOA) to fish under appeal) is projected to be landed. This action is being taken to prevent IFQ scallop vessels from exceeding the 2009 fishing year annual TAC, in accordance with the regulations implementing Amendment 11 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP), enacted by Framework 19 to the FMP, and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

DATES: The closure of the LAGC fishery to all IFQ scallop vessels is effective 0001 hr local time, January 18, 2010, through February 28, 2010.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Don Frei, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281–9221, fax (978) 281–9135.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing fishing activity in the LAGC fishery authorize vessels issued a valid IFQ scallop permit to fish in the LAGC fishery under specific conditions, including a TAC (see §§ 648.59, 648.60, and 648.53(a)(8)(iii)). The TACs were established by the final rule that implemented Framework 19 to the FMP (73 FR 30790, May 29, 2008) and included an annual TAC of 4,590,024 lb (2,082,000 kg) that may be landed by IFQ vessels during the 2009 fishing year, approximately 459,002 lb (208,199 kg) of which was remaining for

harvest at the beginning of the fourth quarter. The regulations at § 648.53(a)(8)(iii) require the LAGC fishery to be closed to IFQ vessels once the Northeast Regional Administrator has determined that the TAC is projected to be landed.

Based on dealer reporting and vessel pre-landing reports through Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), it is projected that, given current fishing activity levels of IFQ scallop vessels in the area, 4,590,024 lb (2,082,000 kg) will have been landed by January 18, 2010. Therefore, in accordance with the regulations at § 648.53(a)(8)(iii), the LAGC scallop fishery is closed to all general IFQ vessels as of 0001 hr local time January 18, 2010. Accordingly, this closure is in effect for the remainder of the fourth quarter of the 2009 scallop fishing year. IFQ scallop vessels are not allowed to fish for, possess, or retain scallops, or declare, or initiate, a scallop trip following this closure for the remainder of the 2009 fourth quarter, ending on February 28, 2010. The LAGC scallop fishery is scheduled to re-open to IFQ scallop vessels on March 1, 2010.

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

This action closes the LAGC scallop fishery to all IFQ scallop vessels until March 1, 2010. The regulations at § 648.53(a)(8)(iii) require such action to ensure that IFQ scallop vessels do not exceed the 2009 fishing year annual TAC. The LAGC scallop fishery opened for the fourth quarter of the 2009 fishing year at 0001 hours on December 1, 2009. Data indicating the IFQ scallop fleet has landed all of the 2009 fourth quarter TAC have only recently become available. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment because it would be contrary to the public interest. If implementation of this closure is delayed to solicit prior public comment, the quota for this quarter will be exceeded, thereby undermining the conservation objectives of the FMP. The AA further finds, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), good cause to waive the 30-day delayed effectiveness period for the reasons stated above.

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

Dated: January 14, 2010

Emily H. Menashes,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 0810141351–9087–02]

RIN 0648–XT86

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Atka Mackerel Lottery in Areas 542 and 543

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

ACTION: Notification of fishery assignments.

SUMMARY: NMFS is notifying the owners and operators of registered vessels of their assignments for the 2010 A season Atka mackerel fishery in harvest limit area (HLA) 542 and/or 543 of the Aleutian Islands subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to allow the harvest of the 2010 A season HLA limits established for area 542 and area 543 pursuant to the final 2009 and 2010 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 19, 2010, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 15, 2010.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (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.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(A), owners and operators of vessels using trawl gear for directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the HLA are required to register with NMFS. Eight vessels have registered with NMFS to fish in the A season HLA fisheries in areas 542 and/or 543. In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(B), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has randomly assigned each vessel to the HLA directed fishery for Atka mackerel for which they have registered and is now notifying each vessel of its assignment in accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii).