

with a minimum of injury. This action is necessary because the allocation of the sablefish 2000 total allowable catch (TAC) assigned to trawl gear in this area has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 24, 2000, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew N. Smoker, 907-526-7210.

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 CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(4)(ii)(B), the Final 2000 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (65 FR 8298, February 18, 2000) established the allocation of the 2000 sablefish TAC assigned to trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA as 1,146 metric tons (mt).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the allocation of the sablefish TAC assigned to trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that further catches of sablefish by vessels using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the allocation of the sablefish TAC assigned to trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The fleet has taken the allocation of the sablefish TAC assigned to trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area. Further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days.

Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: July 24, 2000.

Richard W. Surdi,

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. 000211039-0039-01; I.D. 072400C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Northern Rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area 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 northern rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2000 total allowable catch (TAC) of northern rockfish in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 24, 2000, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Pearson, 907-481-1780, fax 907-481-1781 or tom.pearson@noaa.gov.

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 2000 TAC of northern rockfish for the Western Regulatory Area was established as 630 metric tons (mt) in the Final 2000 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (65 FR 8298, February 18, 2000). See § 679.20(c)(3)(ii).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2000 TAC for northern rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 580 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 50 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 has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for northern rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area 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. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 2000 TAC of northern rockfish for the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. Further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: July 24, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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