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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 161020985-7181-02]

RIN 0648-XF808

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Exchange of Flatfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; reallocation.

SUMMARY: NMFS is exchanging unused flathead sole and rock sole Community Development Quota (CDQ) for yellowfin sole CDQ acceptable biological catch (ABC) reserves in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area. This action is necessary to allow the 2017 total allowable catch of yellowfin sole in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area to be harvested by the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Community Development Association (APICDA).

DATES: Effective *[Insert date of publication in the Federal Register]* through December 31, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI) 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.

The 2017 flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole CDQ reserves specified in the BSAI are 1,228 metric tons (mt), 5,165 mt, and 16,677 mt as established by the final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017) and revised by flatfish exchange (82 FR 49539, October 26, 2017). The 2017 flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole CDQ ABC reserves are 6,078 mt, 11,431 mt and 11,229 mt as established by the final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017) and revised by flatfish exchange (82 FR 49539, October 26, 2017).

The APICDA has requested that NMFS exchange 100 mt of flathead sole sole CDQ reserves and 400 mt of rock sole CDQ reserves for 500 mt of yellowfin sole CDQ ABC reserves under § 679.31(d). Therefore, in accordance with § 679.31(d), NMFS exchanges 100 mt of flathead sole CDQ reserves and 400 mt of rock sole CDQ reserves for 500 mt of yellowfin sole CDQ ABC reserves in the BSAI. This action also decreases and increases the TACs and CDQ ABC reserves by the corresponding amounts. Tables 11 and 13 of the final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017), and revised by flatfish exchange (82 FR 49539, October 26, 2017), are further revised as follows:

TABLE 11—FINAL 2017 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT QUOTA (CDQ) RESERVES, INCIDENTAL CATCH AMOUNTS (ICAs), AND AMENDMENT 80 ALLOCATIONS OF THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS PACIFIC OCEAN PERCH, AND BSAI FLATHEAD SOLE, ROCK SOLE, AND YELLOWFIN SOLE TACS

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector	Pacific ocean perch			Flathead sole	Rock sole	Yellowfin sole
	Eastern Aleutian District	Central Aleutian District	Western Aleutian District	BSAI	BSAI	BSAI
TAC	7,900	7,000	9,000	14,076	46,825	154,699
CDQ	845	749	963	1,128	4,765	17,177
ICA	100	60	10	4,000	5,000	4,500
BSAI trawl limited access	695	619	161	0	0	18,151
Amendment 80	6,259	5,572	7,866	8,949	37,060	114,871
Alaska Groundfish Cooperative	3,319	2,954	4,171	918	9,168	45,638
Alaska Seafood Cooperative	2,940	2,617	3,695	8,031	27,893	69,233

Note: Sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

TABLE 13—FINAL 2017 AND 2018 ABC SURPLUS, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT QUOTA (CDQ) ABC RESERVES, AND AMENDMENT 80 ABC RESERVES IN THE BSAI FOR FLATHEAD SOLE, ROCK SOLE, AND YELLOWFIN SOLE

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector	2017 Flathead sole	2017 Rock sole	2017 Yellowfin sole	2018 Flathead sole	2018 Rock sole	2018 Yellowfin sole
ABC	68,278	155,100	260,800	66,164	143,100	250,800
TAC	14,076	46,825	154,699	14,500	47,100	154,000
ABC surplus	54,202	108,275	106,101	51,664	96,000	96,800
ABC reserve	54,202	108,275	106,101	51,664	96,000	96,800
CDQ ABC reserve	6,178	11,831	10,729	5,528	10,272	10,358
Amendment 80 ABC reserve	48,024	96,444	95,372	46,136	85,728	86,442
Alaska Groundfish Cooperative for 2017 ¹	4,926	23,857	37,891	n/a	n/a	n/a
Alaska Seafood Cooperative for 2017 ¹	43,098	72,587	57,481	n/a	n/a	n/a

¹ The 2018 allocations for Amendment 80 species between Amendment 80 cooperatives and the Amendment 80 limited access sector will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2017.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is

impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the flatfish exchange by the APICDA in the BSAI. Since these fisheries are currently open, it is important to immediately inform the industry as to the revised allocations. Immediate notification is necessary to allow for the orderly conduct and efficient operation of this fishery, to allow the industry to plan for the fishing season, and to avoid potential disruption to the fishing fleet as well as processors. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of October 25, 2017.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: October 31, 2017.

Emily H. Menashes,
Acting Director,
Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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