



**BILLING CODE 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 679**

**[Docket No. 161020985-7181-02]**

**RIN 0648-XF889**

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Atka Mackerel 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 reallocating the projected unused amount of the 2017 Bering Sea subarea and Eastern Aleutian Island District (BS/EAI) Atka mackerel total allowable catch (TAC) assigned to the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) trawl limited access sector to the Amendment 80 cooperative in the BS/EAI of the BSAI. This action is necessary to allow the 2017 TAC of Atka mackerel in the BSAI to be fully harvested.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 15, 2017, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2017.

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

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the 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 Atka mackerel TAC in the BS/EAI assigned to the BSAI trawl limited access sector is 2,966 metric tons (mt) and 2017 Atka mackerel TAC assigned to the Amendment 80 cooperatives is 27,594 mt as established by the final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017) and reallocation (82 FR 45740, October 2, 2017.)

The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that 6 mt of the Atka mackerel TAC for the BS/EAI assigned to the BSAI trawl limited access sector will not be harvested. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.91(f), NMFS reallocates 6 mt of Atka mackerel in the BS/EAI from the BSAI trawl limited access sector to the Amendment 80 cooperatives in the BSAI. In accordance with § 679.91(f), NMFS will reissue cooperative quota permits for the reallocated Atka mackerel following the procedures set forth in § 679.91(f)(3).

The harvest specifications for Atka mackerel included in the harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (82 FR 11826, February 27, 2017) and reallocation (82 FR 45740, October 2, 2017) are revised as follows: 2,960 mt of Atka mackerel in the BS/EAI for the BSAI trawl limited access sector and 27,600 mt for the Amendment 80 cooperative allocations in the BS/EAI. Table 6 is revised and republished in its entirety as follows:

TABLE 6—FINAL 2017 SEASONAL AND SPATIAL ALLOWANCES, GEAR SHARES, CDQ RESERVE, INCIDENTAL CATCH ALLOWANCE, AND AMENDMENT 80 ALLOCATIONS OF THE BSAI ATKA MACKEREL TAC

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector <sup>1</sup>	Season <sup>2,3,4</sup>	2017 allocation by area		
		Eastern Aleutian District/Bering Sea	Central Aleutian District <sup>5</sup>	Western Aleutian District
TAC	n/a	34,500	18,000	12,500
CDQ reserve	Total	3,692	1,926	1,338
	A	1,846	963	669

	Critical Habitat	n/a	578	401
	B	1,846	963	669
	Critical Habitat	n/a	578	401
Non-CDQ TAC	n/a	30,809	16,074	11,163
ICA	Total	100	75	20
Jig <sup>6</sup>	Total	149	0	0
BSAI trawl limited access	Total	2,960	1,600	0
	A	1,480	800	0
	Critical Habitat	n/a	480	0
	B	1,480	800	0
	Critical Habitat	n/a	480	0
Amendment 80 sectors	Total	27,600	14,399	11,143
	A	13,800	7,200	5,571
	B	13,800	7,200	5,571
Alaska Groundfish Cooperative	Total <sup>6</sup>	15,632	8,545	6,852
	A	7,816	4,273	3,426
	Critical Habitat	n/a	2,564	2,056
	B	7,816	4,273	3,426
	Critical Habitat	n/a	2,564	2,056
Alaska Seafood Cooperative	Total <sup>6</sup>	11,967	5,854	4,291
	A	5,984	2,927	2,146
	Critical Habitat	n/a	1,756	1,287
	B	5,984	2,927	2,146
	Critical Habitat	n/a	1,756	1,287

<sup>1</sup> Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii) allocates the Atka mackerel TACs, after subtracting the CDQ reserves, jig gear allocation, and ICAs, to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors. The allocation of the ITAC for Atka mackerel to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors is established in Table 33 to 50 CFR part 679 and § 679.91. The CDQ reserve is 10.7 percent of the TAC for use by CDQ participants (see §§ 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(C) and 679.31).

<sup>2</sup> Sections 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(A) and 679.22(a) establish temporal and spatial limitations for the Atka mackerel fishery.

<sup>3</sup> The seasonal allowances of Atka mackerel are 50 percent in the A season and 50 percent in the B season.

<sup>4</sup> Section 679.23(e)(3) authorizes directed fishing for Atka mackerel with trawl gear during the A season from January 20 to June 10 and the B season from June 10 to December 31.

<sup>5</sup>Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(1)(i) limits no more than 60 percent of the annual TACs in Areas 542 and 543 to be caught inside of critical habitat; section 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(1)(ii) equally divides the annual TACs between the A and B seasons as defined at § 679.23(e)(3); and section 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(2) requires the TAC in Area 543 shall be no more than 65 percent of ABC.

<sup>6</sup> Section 679.20(a)(8)(i) requires that up to 2 percent of the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea TAC be allocated to jig gear after subtracting the CDQ reserve and ICA. The amount of this allocation is 0.5 percent. The jig gear allocation is not apportioned by season.

**Note:** Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

This will enhance the socioeconomic well-being of harvesters dependent upon Atka mackerel in this area. The Regional Administrator considered the following factors in reaching this decision: (1) the current catch of Atka mackerel by the BSAI trawl limited access sector in the BS/EAI, and (2) the harvest capacity and stated intent on future harvesting patterns of the Amendment 80 cooperatives that participate in this BS/EAI fishery.

### **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 reallocation of Atka mackerel in the BS/EAI from the BSAI trawl limited access sector to the Amendment 80 cooperatives in the BSAI. Since the fishery is 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 December 11, 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 § 679.91 and is exempt from review under Executive Order

12866.

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

Dated: December 15, 2017.

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Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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