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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 200221-0062]

RTID 0648-XA414

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Sablefish in the Central
Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska**

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of sablefish by vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the 2020 total allowable catch of sablefish allocated to vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), August 18, 2020, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2020.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish 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 2020 total allowable catch (TAC) of sablefish allocated to vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 626 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (85 FR 13802, March 10, 2020).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2020 TAC of sablefish allocated to vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will be reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that sablefish caught by vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b). This closure does not apply to fishing by vessels participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program for the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR part 679, which was issued pursuant to section 304(b), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment would be

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 prohibited retention of sablefish by vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of August 17, 2020.

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

Dated: August 18, 2020.

Jennifer M. Wallace,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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