



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 200227-0066]

RTID 0648-XA586

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific cod in the Bering Sea

Subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod, except for the Community Development Quota program (CDQ), in the Bering Sea subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the non-CDQ allocation of the 2020 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI.

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Krista Milani, 907-581-2062.

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 non-CDQ allocation of the 2020 Pacific cod TAC in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI is 126,627 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (85 FR 13553, March 9, 2020). In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the non-CDQ allocation of the 2020 Pacific cod TAC in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 126,077 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 550 mt as incidental catch in directed fishing for other species. 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 Pacific cod in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI.

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

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 directed fishing closure of non-CDQ Pacific cod in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of November 17, 2020.

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

Dated: November 18, 2020.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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National Marine Fisheries Service.

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