



## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

#### **50 CFR Part 679**

**[Docket No. 200227-0066]**

**RTID 0648-XA669**

### **Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Arrowtooth Flounder 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; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for arrowtooth flounder in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2020 arrowtooth flounder initial total allowable catch (ITAC) in the BSAI.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), November 20, 2020, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2020.

**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 2020 arrowtooth flounder ITAC in the BSAI is 8,500 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 (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2020 arrowtooth flounder ITAC in the BSAI will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 3,500 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 5,000 mt as incidental catch 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 arrowtooth flounder in the BSAI.

While this closure is effective 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 closure of arrowtooth flounder in 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 18, 2020.

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

Dated: November 20, 2020.

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