



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 200227–0066]

RTID 0648-XA769

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pacific Cod 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 Pacific cod from vessels using jig gear to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 meters) length overall using hook-and-line or pot gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area. This action is necessary to allow the A season apportionment of the 2021 total allowable catch of Pacific cod to be harvested.

DATES: Effective January 7, 2021, through 2400 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 31, 2021.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (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 A season apportionment of the 2021 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) specified for vessels using jig gear in the BSAI is 939 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (85 FR 13553, March 9, 2020) and inseason adjustment (85 FR 83473, December 22, 2020).

The 2021 Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 meters (m)) length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI is 2,222 mt as established by final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (85 FR 13553, March 9, 2020) and inseason adjustment (85 FR 83473, December 22, 2020).

The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that jig vessels will not be able to harvest 900 mt of the A season apportionment of the 2021 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(7)(ii)(A)(I). Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(a)(7)(iv)(C), NMFS apportions 900 mt of Pacific cod from the A season jig gear apportionment to the annual amount specified for catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear.

The harvest specifications for 2021 Pacific cod included in final 2020 and 2021 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (85 FR 13553, March 9, 2020) and inseason adjustment (85 FR 83473, December 22, 2020) are revised as follows: 39 mt to the A season apportionment and 665 mt to the annual amount for vessels using jig gear, and 3,122 mt to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear.

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 reallocation of Pacific cod specified from jig vessels to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of December 30, 2020.

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

Dated: January 4, 2021.

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