



## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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

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

**[Docket No. 210217-0022; RTID 0648-XA946]**

### **Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific cod by Catcher/processors Using Trawl Gear 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 retention of Pacific cod by American Fisheries Act (AFA) trawl catcher/processors in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary because the Pacific cod total allowable catch allocated to AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI has been reached.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 15, 2021, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2021.

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

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone 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 2021 Pacific cod total allowable catch allocated to AFA trawl catcher/processors is 2,571 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (86 FR 11449, February 25, 2021).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the Pacific cod total allowable catch allocated to the AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that Pacific cod caught by AFA trawl catcher/processors in the BSAI be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b).

### **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 prohibiting retention of Pacific cod by AFA trawl catcher/processors 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 March 12, 2021.

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

Dated: March 15, 2021.

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Jennifer M. Wallace,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

