



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 210210-0018]

RTID 0648-XB388

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; “Other Rockfish” in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas 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 “other rockfish” in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2021 total allowable catch of “other rockfish” in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), August 30, 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 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 parts 600 and 679.

The 2021 total allowable catch (TAC) of “other rockfish” in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA is 940 metric tons (mt) as established by the final

2021 and 2022 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (86 FR 10184, February 19, 2021).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2021 “other rockfish” TAC in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that “other rockfish” in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b), as described under § 679.21(a), for the remainder of the year, except other rockfish species in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas of the GOA caught by catcher vessels using hook-and-line, pot, or jig gear as described in § 679.20(j).

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 “other rockfish” in the Western and Central Regulatory Areas 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 26, 2021.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

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

Dated: August 30, 2021.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2021-18990 Filed: 8/30/2021 4:15 pm; Publication Date: 9/2/2021]