



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 230306–0065]

RTID 0648-XD263

### **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, trawl catcher vessels, and catcher vessels greater than or equal to 60 feet (18.3 meters (m)) length overall (LOA) using hook-and-line gear to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to allow the 2023 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod to be harvested.

**DATES:** Effective August 18, 2023, through 2400 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 31, 2023.

**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 (Magnuson-Stevens 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 2023 Pacific cod TAC specified for vessels using jig gear in the BSAI is 748 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2023 and 2024 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (88 FR 14926, March 10, 2023), correction (88 FR 18258, March 28, 2023), and reallocation (88 FR 18443, March 29, 2023).

The 2023 Pacific cod TAC specified for trawl catcher vessels in the BSAI is 26,807 mt as established by the final 2023 and 2024 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (88 FR 14926, March 10, 2023) and correction (88 FR 18258, March 28, 2023).

The 2023 Pacific cod TAC specified for catcher vessels greater than or equal to 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI is 241 mt as established by the final 2023 and 2024 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (88 FR 14926, March 10, 2023) and correction (88 FR 18258, March 28, 2023).

The 2023 Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in the BSAI is 3,360 mt as established by final 2023 and 2024 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (88 FR 14926, March 10, 2023), correction (88 FR 18258, March 28, 2023), and reallocation (88 FR 18443, March 29, 2023).

The Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that jig vessels will not be able to harvest 650 mt of the 2023 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(7)(ii)(A)(1), trawl catcher vessels will not be able to harvest 500 mt of the 2023 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(7)(ii)(A)(9), and catcher vessels greater than or equal to 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear will not be able to harvest 230 mt of the 2023 Pacific cod TAC allocated to those vessels under § 679.20(a)(7)(ii)(A)(3).

Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(a)(7)(iv)(C), NMFS apportions 650 mt of Pacific cod from the jig vessels to the annual amount specified for catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear. Also, in accordance with § 679.20(a)(7)(iii)(A), NMFS reallocates 500 mt from trawl catcher vessels, and 230 mt from the catcher vessels greater than or equal to 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear 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 2023 Pacific cod included in final 2023 and 2024 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (88 FR 14926, March 10, 2023), correction (88 FR 18258, March 28, 2023), and reallocation (88 FR 18443, March 29, 2023) is revised as follows: 98 mt to vessels using jig gear, 26,307 mt to trawl catcher vessels, 11 mt to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line gear, and 4,740 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. This requirement is 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 allow for harvests that exceed the originally specified apportionment of the Pacific cod TAC. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of August 15, 2023.

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 15, 2023.

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Kelly Denit,  
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,  
National Marine Fisheries Service.