



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 250312-0037; RTID 0648-XF462]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Demersal Shelf Rockfish in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat 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 directed fishing of demersal shelf rockfish in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2026 total allowable catch (TAC) of demersal shelf rockfish in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 6, 2026, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2026.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Abby Jahn, 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 and recommended 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 2026 TAC of demersal shelf rockfish in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas of the GOA is 271 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (90 FR 12468, March 18, 2025).

The Regional Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that there is not sufficient demersal shelf rockfish TAC to allow directed fishing in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas of the GOA and that 271 mt is necessary as incidental catch to support other groundfish fisheries. The Regional Administrator has further determined that the 2026 demersal shelf rockfish TAC in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas of the GOA will be or has been reached. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 0 and is setting aside 271 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 will be or has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for demersal shelf rockfish in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas of the GOA to prevent exceeding the demersal shelf rockfish TAC.

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) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, 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 on demersal shelf rockfish catch in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of directed fishing for demersal shelf rockfish in the Western, Central, and West Yakutat Regulatory Areas of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data on demersal shelf rockfish catch only became available as of February 4, 2026.

There is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) to establish an effective date less than 30 days after date of publication. 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: February 5, 2026.

David R. Blankinship,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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