



## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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

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

**[Docket No. 260305-0067; RTID 0648-XF430]**

### **Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels Greater Than or Equal to 50 Feet Length Overall Using Hook-and-Line Gear in the Central Regulatory Area 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 for Pacific cod by catcher vessels  
greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 meters (m)) length overall using hook-and-line  
(HAL) gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is  
necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowance of the 2026 Pacific cod total  
allowable catch (TAC) allocated to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2  
m) length overall using HAL gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 16, 2026, through 1200  
hours, A.l.t., September 1, 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 GOA (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 A season allowance of the 2026 Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) length overall using HAL gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 1,160 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (90 FR 12468, March 18, 2025) and the inseason adjustment (91 FR 5858, February 10, 2026).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the A season allowance of the 2026 Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) length overall using HAL gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will be or has been reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 1,060 mt and is setting aside the remaining 100 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 has been or will be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) length overall using HAL gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA to prevent exceeding this sector's A season allowance of Pacific cod 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 Pacific cod catch in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels greater than or equal to 50 feet (15.2 m) length overall using HAL gear in the A season in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data on Pacific cod catch only became available as of March 13, 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: March 14, 2026.

**David R. Blankinship,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,*

*National Marine Fisheries Service.*