

**Classification**

This action responds to the interim TAC limitations and other restrictions on the fisheries established in the 2000 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the amount of the Pacific cod TAC apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest, and further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 2, 2000.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 00-5592 Filed 3-3-00; 1:15 pm]

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 679**

[Docket No. 000211040-0040-01; I.D. 030200B]

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Species in the Rock sole/Flathead sole/"Other flatfish" Fishery Category by Vessels Using Trawl Gear in Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is closing directed fishing for species in the rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category by vessels using trawl gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the first seasonal apportionment of the 2000 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance of halibut specified for the trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 4, 2000, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2000.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew Smoker, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands 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 halibut bycatch mortality first seasonal apportionment specified for the BSAI trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category, which is defined at § 679.21(e)(3)(iv)(B)(2), was established as 488 metric tons by the Final 2000 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish (65 FR 8282, February 18, 2000).

In accordance with § 679.21(e)(7)(v), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the first seasonal apportionment of the 2000 halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery in the BSAI has been caught. Consequently, the Regional Administrator is closing directed fishing for species in the rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category by vessels using trawl gear in the BSAI.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent exceeding the first seasonal apportionment of the 2000 halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" fishery category. Providing prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The fleet will soon take the apportionment. Further delay would only result in the first seasonal apportionment of the 2000 halibut bycatch allowance being exceeded. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

**Classification**

This action is required by 50 CFR 679.21 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 3, 2000.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 679**

[Docket No. 000211039-0039-01; I.D. 030200A]

**Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Vessels Catching Pacific Cod for Processing by the Inshore Component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the amount of the Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 4, 2000, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2000.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew Smoker, 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 part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(ii), the Pacific cod TAC apportioned to

vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area was established as 14,850 metric tons (mt), by the Final 2000 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (8298 FR 65, February 18, 2000).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the amount of the Pacific cod TAC apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component of the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 14,350 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 500 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional

Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

#### **Classification**

This action responds to the interim TAC limitations and other restrictions on the fisheries established in the final 2000 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the amount of the Pacific cod TAC apportioned to vessels catching Pacific cod for processing by

the inshore component in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the public interest, and further delay would only result in overharvest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action should not be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: March 3, 2000.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
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