

Since letters of authorization are effective the day after they are requested, vessel owners should allow appropriate processing and mail time. To withdraw from a category, vessel owners must write to or call the Northeast Region Permit Office. Withdrawals are effective the day after the date of request. Withdrawals may occur after a minimum of 7 days of enrollment.

(B) Up to and including April 30, 2002, all nets must comply with a minimum mesh size of 2.5-inch (6.35-cm) square or diamond mesh, subject to the restrictions as specified in paragraph (a)(14)(i)(D) of this section. An owner or operator of a vessel enrolled in the raised footrope whiting fishery may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than whiting and offshore hake subject to the applicable possession limits as specified in § 648.86, except for the following allowable incidental species: Red hake; butterfish; dogfish; herring; mackerel; scup; and squid.

(C) Beginning May 1, 2002, in addition to the requirements specified in paragraph (a)(14)(i)(B) of this section, all nets must comply with a minimum mesh size of 3-inch (7.62-cm) square or diamond mesh, subject to the restrictions as specified in paragraph (a)(14)(i)(D) of this section. An owner or operator of any vessel enrolled in the raised footrope whiting fishery may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than: Silver hake and offshore hake—up to 10,000 lb (4,536 kg); red hake; butterfish; dogfish; herring; mackerel; scup; and squid.

(D) All nets must comply with the minimum mesh sizes specified in paragraphs (a)(14)(i)(B) and (C) of this section. Counting from the terminus of the net, the minimum mesh size is applied to the first 100 meshes (200 bars in the case of square mesh) from the terminus of the net for vessels greater than 60 ft (18.28 m) in length and the first 50 meshes (100 bars in the case of square mesh) from the terminus of the net for vessels less than or equal to 60 ft (18.28 m) in length.

(E) Raised footrope trawl gear is required and must be configured as specified in paragraphs (a)(8)(ii)(A) through (D) of this section.

(F) Fishing may only occur from September 1 through November 20 of each fishing year.

(G) A vessel enrolled in the Raised Footrope Trawl Whiting Fishery may fish for small-mesh multispecies in exempted fisheries outside of the Raised Footrope Trawl Whiting Fishery exemption area, provided that the vessel complies with the more restrictive gear,

possession limit and other requirements specified in the regulations of that exempted fishery for the entire participation period specified on the vessel's letter of authorization. For example, a vessel may fish in both the Raised Footrope Trawl Whiting Fishery and the Cultivator Shoal Whiting Fishery Exemption Area and would be restricted to a minimum mesh size of 3 inches (7.62 cm), as required in the Cultivator Shoal Whiting Fishery Exemption Area, the use of the raised footrope trawl, and the catch and bycatch restrictions of the Raised Footrope Trawl Whiting Fishery, except for red hake, which is restricted to 10 percent of the total catch under the Cultivator Shoal Whiting Fishery.

(ii) *Sea sampling.* The Regional Administrator shall conduct periodic sea sampling to evaluate the bycatch of regulated species.

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4. In § 648.81, paragraph (g)(2)(v) is added to read as follows:

§ 648.81 Multispecies closed areas.

* * * * *

(g) * * *

(2) * * *

(v) That are fishing in the Raised Footrope Trawl Exempted Whiting Fishery, as specified in § 648.80(a)(14), and in the Gulf of Maine Rolling Closure Area V, as specified in paragraph (g)(1)(v) of this section.

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[FR Doc. 00-20847 Filed 8-15-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 000211039-0039-01; I.D. 081000C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Shallow-water Species Fishery by Vessels Using Trawl Gear in 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 species that comprise the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), except for vessels fishing for pollock using pelagic trawl gear in those portions of the GOA open to directed

fishing for pollock. This action is necessary because the third seasonal apportionment of the 2000 halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl shallow-water species fishery in the GOA has been caught.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), August 11, 2000, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., October 1, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 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.

The Pacific halibut bycatch allowance for the GOA trawl shallow-water species fishery, which is defined at § 679.21(d)(3)(iii)(A), was established by the Final 2000 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish for the GOA (65 FR 8298, February 18, 2000) for the third season, the period July 4, 2000, through September 30, 2000, as 200 metric tons.

In accordance with § 679.21(d)(7)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the third seasonal apportionment of the 2000 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl shallow-water species fishery in the GOA has been caught. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for species included in the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the GOA, except for vessels fishing for pollock using pelagic trawl gear in those portions of the GOA open to directed fishing for pollock. The species and species groups that comprise the shallow-water species fishery are: pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, and "other species."

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

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately in order to prevent exceeding the third seasonal apportionment of the 2000 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl shallow-water species fishery in the GOA. A delay in the effective date is impracticable and contrary to the

public interest. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action can 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 § 679.21 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: August 11, 2000.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

[FR Doc. 00-20801 Filed 8-11-00; 4:23 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F