

design standards for line clippers. The Arceneaux line clipper is a model that meets these minimum design standards and may be fabricated from readily available and low-cost materials (65 FR 16347, March 28, 2000). The minimum design standards for line clippers are as follows:

(1) *A protected cutting blade.* The cutting blade must be curved, recessed, contained in a holder, or otherwise designed to minimize direct contact of the cutting surface with sea turtles or users of the cutting blade.

(2) *Cutting blade edge.* The blade must be able to cut 2.0–2.1 mm monofilament line and nylon or polypropylene multistrand material commonly known as braided mainline or tarred mainline.

(3) *An extended reach holder for the cutting blade.* The line clipper must have an extended reach handle or pole of at least 6 ft (1.82 m).

(4) *Secure fastener.* The cutting blade must be securely fastened to the extended reach handle or pole to ensure effective deployment and use.

(B) *Dipnets.* Dipnets are intended to facilitate safe handling of sea turtles and access to sea turtles for purposes of cutting lines in a manner that prevents injury and trauma to sea turtles. The minimum design standards for dipnets are as follows:

(1) *Extended reach handle.* The dipnet must have an extended reach handle of at least 6 ft (1.82 m) of wood or other rigid material able to support a minimum of 100 lbs (34.1 kg) without breaking or significant bending or distortion.

(2) *Size of dipnet.* The dipnet must have a net hoop of at least 31 inches (78.74 cm) inside diameter and a bag depth of at least 38 inches (96.52 cm). The bag mesh openings may not exceed 3 inches × 3 inches (7.62 cm × 7.62 cm).

(ii) *Handling requirements.* (A) The dipnets required by this paragraph should be used to facilitate access and safe handling of sea turtles where feasible. The line clippers must be used to disentangle sea turtles from fishing gear or to cut fishing line as close as possible to a hook that cannot be removed without causing further injury.

(B) When practicable, active and comatose sea turtles must be brought on board immediately, with a minimum of injury, and handled in accordance with the procedures specified in § 223.206(d)(1).

(C) If a sea turtle is too large or hooked in a manner that precludes safe boarding without causing further damage or injury to the turtle, line clippers described in paragraph (c)(5)(i)(A) of this section must be used

to clip the line and remove as much line as possible prior to releasing the turtle.

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4. In § 635.71, paragraphs (a)(33) and (a)(34) are added to read as follows:

§ 635.71 Prohibitions.

* * * * *

(a) * * *

(33) Deploy or fish with any fishing gear from a vessel with pelagic longline gear on board without carrying a dipnet and line clipper as specified at § 635.21(c)(5)(i).

(34) Fail to disengage any hooked or entangled sea turtle with the least harm possible to the sea turtle as specified at § 635.21(c)(5)(ii).

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 000831250–0250–01; 031901D]

Fisheries off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Coastal Pelagic Species Fisheries; Closure of Fishery for Pacific Mackerel

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

ACTION: Closure of fishery for Pacific mackerel.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the closure of the fishery for Pacific mackerel in the exclusive economic zone off the Pacific coast at 12 a.m. on March 27, 2001. The Coastal Pelagic Species Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and its implementing regulations require NMFS to set an annual harvest guideline for Pacific mackerel based on a formula in the FMP and to close the fishery when the harvest guideline is reached. The harvest guideline of 20,740 metric tons (mt) has been reached. Following this date no more than 1 mt of Pacific mackerel may be landed from any fishing trip. The effect of this action is to ensure conservation of the Pacific mackerel resource.

DATES: Effective at 12 a.m. on March 27, 2001 through June 30, 2001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James J. Morgan, Southwest Region, NMFS, 562–980–4036.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 11, 2000, NMFS announced

a harvest guideline for Pacific mackerel in the **Federal Register** (65 FR 54817) of 20,740 mt for the fishing season of July 1, 2000, through June 30, 2001. The harvest guideline was based on an annual biomass estimate and calculated by a formula in the FMP applying information on that portion of the stock in U.S. waters and the required harvest rate above a minimum biomass.

On October 27, 2000, (65 FR 65272, November 1, 2000), the directed fishery for Pacific mackerel was closed and an incidental landing of Pacific mackerel of 20 percent of the total weight of all coastal pelagic species was implemented. Subsequent changes to the incidental landing provision were published on November 17, 2000 (65 FR 69483), and February 22, 2001 (65 FR 11119).

As of March 12, 2001, 20,751 mt of Pacific mackerel has been harvested; therefore, the fishery must be closed.

For the reasons stated here and in accordance with the FMP and its regulations governing closure of the fishery, the fishery for Pacific mackerel will be closed at 12 a.m. on March 27, 2001, after which time no more than 1 mt of any landing may be Pacific mackerel.

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR 660.509 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 27, 2001.

Bruce C. Morehead,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 01–7932 Filed 3–27–01; 2:54 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 010112013–1013–01; I.D. 032601B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels 60 Feet Length Overall and Longer Using Hook-and-line Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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 catcher vessels 60 ft (18.3 meters (m)) length overall (LOA) and longer using hook-and-line gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season apportionment of the 2001 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific cod allocated to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 27, 2001, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., June 10, 2001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew N. Smoker, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI 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 A season apportionment of the 2001 Pacific cod TAC allocated to

catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI was established by the Final 2001 Harvest Specifications and Associated Management Measures for the Groundfish Fisheries Off Alaska (66 FR 7276, January 22, 2001) as a directed fishing allowance of 159 metric tons. See § 679.20(c)(3)(iii), § 679.20(c)(7), and § 679.20(a)(7)(i)(A) and (C).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the A season apportionment of the 2001 Pacific cod TAC allocated as a directed fishing allowance to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA and longer using hook-and-line gear in the BSAI.

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. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds that the need to immediately implement this action to prevent

exceeding the A season apportionment of the 2001 Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear constitutes good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(3)(B) and 50 CFR 679.20(b)(3)(iii)(A), as such procedures would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Similarly, the need to implement these measures in a timely fashion to prevent exceeding the A season apportionment of the 2001 Pacific cod TAC allocated to catcher vessels using hook-and-line gear constitutes good cause to find that the effective date of this action cannot 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 Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 26, 2001.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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

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