

The first seasonal allowance of the 2012 Pacific halibut PSC limit specified for the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels in the GOA is 10 metric tons as established by the final 2011 and 2012 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (76 FR 11111, March 1, 2011) for the period 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 20, 2012, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2012.

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(vi)(C)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the first seasonal apportionment of the 2012 Pacific halibut PSC limit specified for the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels in the GOA has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels subject to sideboard limits in the GOA. The species and species groups that comprise the shallow-water species fishery are pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates, and “other species.”

After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of the shallow-water species fishery by Amendment 80 vessels subject to sideboard limits using trawl gear in the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of February 23, 2012.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C.

553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

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: February 24, 2012.

Steven Thur,

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. 111213751-2102-02]

RIN 0648-XB038

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pollock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

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

ACTION: Temporary rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS is reallocating the projected unused amounts of the Aleut Corporation’s pollock directed fishing allowance and the Community Development Quota from the Aleutian Islands subarea to the Bering Sea subarea directed fisheries. These actions are necessary to provide opportunity for harvest of the 2012 total allowable catch of pollock, consistent with the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 29, 2012, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 907-586-7269.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management

Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (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 the Aleutian Islands subarea, the portion of the 2012 pollock total allowable catch (TAC) allocated to the Aleut Corporation’s directed fishing allowance (DFA) is 15,500 metric tons (mt) and the Community Development Quota (CDQ) is 1,900 mt as established by the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (77 FR 10669, February 23, 2012).

As of February 23, 2012, the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that 10,500 mt of Aleut Corporation’s DFA and 1,900 mt of pollock CDQ in the Aleutian Islands subarea will not be harvested. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(4), NMFS reallocates 10,500 mt of Aleut Corporation’s DFA and 1,900 mt of pollock CDQ from the Aleutian Islands subarea to the 2012 Bering Sea subarea allocations. The 1,900 mt of pollock CDQ is added to the 2012 Bering Sea CDQ DFA. The remaining 10,500 mt of pollock is apportioned to the AFA Inshore sector (50 percent), AFA catcher/processor sector (40 percent), and the AFA mothership sector (10 percent). The 2012 pollock incidental catch allowance remains at 32,400 mt. As a result, the harvest specifications for pollock in the Aleutian Islands subarea included in the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (77 FR 10669, February 23, 2012) are revised as follows: 5,000 mt to Aleut Corporation’s DFA and 0 mt to CDQ pollock. Furthermore, pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5), Table 3 of the final 2012 and 2013 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (77 FR 10669, February 23, 2012) is revised to make 2012 pollock allocations consistent with this reallocation. This reallocation results in adjustments to the 2012 Aleut Corporation and CDQ pollock allocations established at § 679.20(a)(5).

TABLE 3—FINAL 2012 AND 2013 ALLOCATIONS OF POLLOCK TACS TO THE DIRECTED POLLOCK FISHERIES AND TO THE CDQ DIRECTED FISHING ALLOWANCES (DFA) ¹

[Amounts are in metric tons]

| Area and sector | 2012 Allocations | 2012 A season ¹ | | 2012 B season ¹ | | 2013 Allocations | 2013 A season ¹ | | 2013 B season ¹ |
|---|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| | | A season DFA | SCA harvest limit ² | B season DFA | A season DFA | | SCA harvest limit ² | B season DFA | |
| Bering Sea subarea | 1,212,400 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 1,201,900 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| CDQ DFA | 121,900 | 48,760 | 34,132 | 73,140 | 120,190 | 48,076 | 33,653 | 72,114 | |
| ICA ¹ | 32,400 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 32,451 | n/a | n/a | n/a | |
| AFA Inshore | 529,050 | 211,620 | 148,134 | 317,430 | 524,629 | 209,852 | 146,896 | 314,778 | |
| AFA Catcher/Processors ³ | 423,240 | 169,296 | 118,507 | 253,944 | 419,703 | 167,881 | 117,517 | 251,822 | |
| Catch by C/Ps | 387,265 | 154,906 | n/a | 232,359 | 384,029 | 153,611 | n/a | 230,417 | |
| Catch by CVs ³ | 35,975 | 14,390 | n/a | 21,585 | 35,675 | 14,270 | n/a | 21,405 | |
| Unlisted C/P Limit ⁴ | 2,116 | 846 | n/a | 1,270 | 2,099 | 839 | n/a | 1,259 | |
| AFA Motherships | 105,810 | 42,324 | 29,627 | 63,486 | 104,926 | 41,970 | 29,379 | 62,956 | |
| Excessive Harvesting Limit ⁵ | 185,168 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 183,620 | n/a | n/a | n/a | |
| Excessive Processing Limit ⁶ | 317,430 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 314,778 | n/a | n/a | n/a | |
| Total Bering Sea DFA | 1,058,100 | 423,240 | 296,268 | 634,860 | 1,049,259 | 419,703 | 293,792 | 629,555 | |
| Aleutian Islands subarea ¹ | 6,600 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 19,000 | n/a | n/a | n/a | |
| CDQ DFA | 0 | 0 | n/a | 0 | 1,900 | 760 | n/a | 1,140 | |
| ICA | 1,600 | 800 | n/a | 800 | 1,600 | 800 | n/a | 800 | |
| Aleut Corporation | 5,000 | 15,500 | n/a | 0 | 15,500 | 15,500 | n/a | 0 | |
| Bogoslof District ICA ⁷ | 150 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 150 | n/a | n/a | n/a | |

¹ Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A), the BS subarea pollock, after subtracting the CDQ DFA (10 percent) and the ICA (3 percent), is allocated as a DFA as follows: inshore sector—50 percent, catcher/processor sector (C/P)—40 percent, and mothership sector—10 percent. In the BS subarea, 40 percent of the DFA is allocated to the A season (January 20–June 10) and 60 percent of the DFA is allocated to the B season (June 10–November 1). Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(2)(i) and (ii), the annual AI pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ directed fishing allowance (10 percent) and second the ICA (1,600 mt), is allocated to the Aleut Corporation for a directed pollock fishery. In the AI subarea, the A season is allocated 40 percent of the ABC and the B season is allocated the remainder of the directed pollock fishery.

² In the BS subarea, no more than 28 percent of each sector's annual DFA may be taken from the SCA before April 1. The remaining 12 percent of the annual DFA allocated to the A season may be taken outside of SCA before April 1 or inside the SCA after April 1. If less than 28 percent of the annual DFA is taken inside the SCA before April 1, the remainder will be available to be taken inside the SCA after April 1.

³ Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(4), not less than 8.5 percent of the DFA allocated to listed catcher/processers shall be available for harvest only by eligible catcher vessels delivering to listed catcher/processers.

⁴ Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(4)(iii), the AFA unlisted catcher/processers are limited to harvesting not more than 0.5 percent of the catcher/processers sector's allocation of pollock.

⁵ Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(6), NMFS establishes an excessive harvesting share limit equal to 17.5 percent of the sum of the non-CDQ pollock DFAs.

⁶ Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(7), NMFS establishes an excessive processing share limit equal to 30.0 percent of the sum of the non-CDQ pollock DFAs.

⁷ The Bogoslof District is closed by the final harvest specifications to directed fishing for pollock. The amounts specified are for ICA only and are not apportioned by season or sector.

Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the reallocation of AI pollock.

Since the pollock fishery is currently open, it is important to immediately inform the industry as to the final Bering Sea subarea pollock allocations. Immediate notification is necessary to allow for the orderly conduct and efficient operation of this fishery; allow the industry to plan for the fishing season and avoid potential disruption to the fishing fleet as well as processors; and provide opportunity to harvest increased seasonal pollock allocations while value is optimum. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of February 23, 2012.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

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: February 24, 2012.

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

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