

On February 26, 2016 (81 FR 9786), NMFS published a temporary rule in the **Federal Register** to reduce the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper in or from the EEZ of the South Atlantic to 500 lb (227 kg), gutted weight, effective 12:01 a.m., local time, March 2, 2016, until July 1, 2016, or until the quota was reached and the commercial sector closed, whichever would occur first.

In accordance with regulations at 50 CFR 622.193(f)(1), NMFS is required to close the commercial sector for vermilion snapper when the commercial quota for that portion of the fishing year has been reached, or is projected to be reached, by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. NMFS has determined that the commercial quota for South Atlantic vermilion snapper for the January through June fishing period will be reached by March 29, 2016.

Accordingly, the commercial sector for South Atlantic vermilion snapper is closed effective 12:01 a.m., local time, March 29, 2016, until 12:01 a.m., local time, July 1, 2016. The commercial quota for vermilion snapper in the South Atlantic is 388,703 lb (176,313 kg), gutted weight (431,460 lb (195,707 kg), round weight), for the July 1 through December 31, 2016, fishing period, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(a)(4)(ii)(D).

The operator of a vessel with a valid commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper having vermilion snapper on board must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such vermilion snapper prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, March 29, 2016. During the closure, the bag limit specified in 50 CFR 622.187(b)(5) and the possession limits specified in 50 CFR 622.187(c)(1), apply to all harvest or possession of vermilion snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ. During the closure, the sale or purchase of vermilion snapper taken from the EEZ is prohibited. As specified in 50 CFR 622.190(c)(1)(i), the prohibition on sale or purchase does not apply to the sale or purchase of vermilion snapper that were harvested, landed ashore, and sold prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, March 29, 2016, and were held in cold storage by a dealer or processor. For a person on board a vessel for which a Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery has been issued, the bag and possession limits and the sale and purchase provisions of the commercial closure for vermilion snapper would apply regardless of whether the fish are harvested in state or Federal waters, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(c)(1)(ii).

## Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of South Atlantic vermilion snapper and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(f)(1) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the commercial sector for vermilion snapper constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such procedures would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures would be unnecessary because the rule itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Allowing prior notice and opportunity for public comment is contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect vermilion snapper since the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial quota. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and could result in a harvest well in excess of the established commercial quota.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

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

Dated: March 21, 2016.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

*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. 150916863-6211-02]

RIN 0648-XE532

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod in the Aleutian Islands Subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

**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, except for the Community Development Quota program (CDQ), in the Aleutian Islands subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the non-CDQ allocation of the 2016 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) in the Aleutian Islands subarea of the BSAI.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 22, 2016, through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Josh Keaton, 907-586-7269.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI 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 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 non-CDQ allocation of the 2016 Pacific cod TAC in the Aleutian Islands subarea of the BSAI is 11,465 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (81 FR 14773, March 18, 2016). In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the non-CDQ allocation of the 2016 Pacific cod TAC in the Aleutian Islands subarea of the BSAI will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 9,000 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 2,465 mt as

incidental catch in directed fishing for other species. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands subarea of the BSAI.

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 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)(3) 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 directed fishing closure of non-CDQ Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands subarea of the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of March 21, 2016.

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: March 22, 2016.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

*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. 150916863–6211–02]

RIN 0648–XE518

### 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 2016 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.), March 25, 2016, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Steve Whitney, 907–586–7228.

**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 2016 pollock total allowable catch (TAC) allocated to the Aleut Corporation's directed fishing allowance (DFA) is 14,700 metric tons (mt) and the Community Development Quota (CDQ) is 1,900 mt as established by the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (81 FR 14773, March 18, 2016).

As of March 18, 2016, the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that 5,000 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 5,000 mt of Aleut Corporation's DFA and 1,900 mt of pollock CDQ from the Aleutian Islands subarea to the 2016 Bering Sea subarea allocations. The 1,900 mt of pollock CDQ is added to the 2016 Bering Sea CDQ DFA. The remaining 5,000 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 2016 pollock incidental catch allowance remains at 48,240 mt. As a result, the harvest specifications for pollock in the Aleutian Islands subarea included in the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (81 FR 14773, March 18, 2016) are revised as follows: 9,700 mt to Aleut Corporation's DFA and 0 mt to CDQ pollock. Furthermore, pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5), Table 4 of the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (81 FR 14773, March 18, 2016) is revised to make 2016 pollock allocations consistent with this reallocation. This reallocation results in adjustments to the 2016 Aleut Corporation and CDQ pollock allocations established at § 679.20(a)(5).

**TABLE 4—FINAL 2016 ALLOCATIONS OF POLLOCK TACS TO THE DIRECTED POLLOCK FISHERIES AND TO THE CDQ DIRECTED FISHING ALLOWANCES (DFA) <sup>1</sup>**

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Area and sector	2016 Allocations	2016 A season <sup>1</sup>		2016 B season <sup>1</sup>
		A season DFA	SCA harvest limit <sup>2</sup>	B season DFA
Bering Sea subarea TAC <sup>1</sup>	1,346,900	n/a	n/a	n/a
CDQ DFA	135,900	54,360	38,052	81,540
ICA <sup>1</sup>	48,240	n/a	n/a	n/a
AFA Inshore	581,380	232,552	162,786	348,828
AFA Catcher/Processors <sup>3</sup>	465,104	186,042	130,229	279,062
Catch by C/Ps	425,570	170,228	n/a	255,342
Catch by CVs <sup>3</sup>	39,534	15,814	n/a	23,720