

immediate action to be effective on the fishing grounds and thus efficiently manage the fishery. NMFS could not effectively react to this data if, in implementing the retention limit, it allowed a public comment period, which, for both the quota transfers, would preclude fishermen from harvesting BFT that are legally available consistent with all of the regulatory criteria.

Delays in adjusting the retention limit may result in the available quota being exceeded and NMFS needing to close the fishery earlier than otherwise would be necessary under a lower limit. This could adversely affect those General and HMS Charter/Headboat category vessels that would otherwise have an opportunity to harvest BFT under retention limits set in response to the most recent data available. Limited opportunities to harvest the respective quotas may have negative social and economic impacts for U.S. fishermen that depend upon catching the available quota within the time periods designated in the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP, as amended. Adjustment of the retention limit needs to be effective as soon as possible to extend fishing opportunities for fishermen in geographic areas with access to the fishery only during this time period. Therefore, the AA finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment. For these reasons, there is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

This action is being taken under §§ 635.23(a)(4) and 635.27(a)(9), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: October 14, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 2016-25309 Filed 10-14-16; 4:15 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 160301164-6694-02]

RIN 0648-XE955

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Skate Complex; Adjustment to the Skate Bait Inseason Possession Limit

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; inseason adjustment.

SUMMARY: We announce the reduction of the commercial per-trip skate bait possession limit from 25,000 lb (11,340 kg) to 9,307 lb (4,222 kg) whole weight through October 31, 2016. This action is required to prevent the skate bait Season 2 quota from being exceeded. This announcement informs the public that the skate bait possession limit is reduced.

DATES: Effective October 17, 2016, through October 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: William Whitmore, Fishery Policy Analyst, 978-281-9182.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The bait skate fishery is managed primarily through the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan. The regulations describing the process to adjust inseason commercial possession limits of skate bait are described at 50 CFR 648.322(b) and (d). When the National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region projects that 90 percent of the skate bait fishery seasonal quota has been landed, the Regional Administrator is required to reduce the skate bait trip limit unless such a reduction would be expected to prevent attainment of the seasonal quota or annual TAL. The current skate bait trip limit is 25,000 lb (11,340 kg) and the current skate wing trip limit is 9,307 lb (4,222 kg) whole weight, 4,100 lb (1,860 kg) skate wings.

Inseason Action

Based on commercial landings data reported through October 1, 2016, the skate bait fishery is projected to reach or exceed 90 percent of the Season 2 quota on or around October 15, 2016. Further, catch projections indicate that retaining the current skate bait possession limits

would result in 109 percent of the Season 2 quota being harvested. Additional projections indicate that the annual TAL is likely to be attained in Season 3, even with this season 2 possession limit reduction. Therefore, consistent with § 648.322(b) and (d) we are reducing the skate wing trip limit from 25,000 lb (11,340 kg) to 9,307 lb (4,222 kg) whole weight [4,100 lb (1,860 kg) skate wings] to prevent the season 2 quota from being exceeded. Beginning October 17, 2016, no person may possess on board or land more than 9,307 lb (4,222 kg) of skate bait per trip for the remainder of Season 2 (*i.e.*, through October 31, 2016). The 25,000 lb (11,340 kg) skate bait trip limit is reinstated on November 1, 2016, the start of Season 3.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: October 13, 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. 150818742-6210-02]

RIN 0648-XE966

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of the incidental catch allowance for Pacific Ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the 2016 total allowable catch of Pacific Ocean perch apportioned to the incidental catch allowance in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 14, 2016, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 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 2016 total allowable catch (TAC) of Pacific Ocean perch apportioned to the incidental catch allowance in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 1,500 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (81 FR 14740; March 18, 2016).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2016 TAC of Pacific Ocean perch apportioned to the incidental catch allowance in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that catches of the incidental catch allowance for Pacific ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b). This closure does not apply to fishing by vessels participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program for the Central GOA.

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)(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 prohibiting retention of the incidental catch allowance for Pacific Ocean perch in the Central Regulatory Area of 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 October 12, 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 § 679.21 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: October 13, 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. 150818742-6210-02]

RIN 0648-XE967

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Sablefish in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of sablefish by vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the 2016 total allowable catch of sablefish allocated to vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 14, 2016, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 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 2016 total allowable catch (TAC) of sablefish by vessels using trawl gear

and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 391 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (81 FR 14740, March 18, 2016).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2016 TAC of sablefish by vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that sablefish by vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA be treated as prohibited species in accordance with § 679.21(b). This closure does not apply to fishing by vessels participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program for the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

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)(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 prohibiting the retention of sablefish by vessels using trawl gear and not participating in the cooperative fishery of the Rockfish Program in the Central Regulatory Area of 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 October 12, 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 § 679.21 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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