DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 161017970–6999–02]

RIN 0648–XF651

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Scup Fishery; Adjustment to the 2017 Winter II Quota

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; inseason adjustment.

SUMMARY: NMFS adjusts the 2017 Winter II commercial scup quota and per trip Federal landing limit. This action is intended to comply with Framework Adjustment 3 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan that established the rollover of unused commercial scup quota from the Winter I period to the Winter II period. This notice is intended to inform the public of this quota and trip limit change.


FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cynthia Hanson, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281–9180.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS published a final rule in the Federal Register on November 3, 2003 (68 FR 62250), implementing a process to roll over unused Winter I commercial scup quota (January 1 through April 30) to be added to the Winter II period quota (November 1 through December 31). This framework also allows adjustment of the commercial possession limit for the Winter II period dependent on the amount of quota rolled over from the Winter I period.

For 2017, the initial Winter II quota is 2,929,762 lb (1,329 mt). The best available landings information indicates that 2,231,152 lb (1,012 mt) remain of the 8,291,190 lb (3,761 mt) of Winter I quota. Consistent with Framework 3, the full amount of unused 2017 Winter I quota is being transferred to Winter II, resulting in a revised 2017 Winter II quota of 5,160,914 lb (2,341 mt). Because the amount transferred is greater than 2,000,000 lb (907 mt), the Federal per trip possession limit will increase from 12,000 lb (5,443 kg) to 18,000 lb (8,165 kg), as outlined in the final rule that established the possession limit and quota rollover procedures for this year, published on December 28, 2015 (80 FR 80689).

Classification

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

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment on this in-season adjustment because it would be contrary to the public interest. If implementation of this in-season action is delayed to solicit prior public comment, the objective of the fishery management plan to achieve the optimum yield from the fishery could be compromised; deteriorating weather conditions during the latter part of the fishing year will reduce fishing effort and could prevent the annual quota from being fully harvested. This would conflict with the agency’s legal obligation under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to achieve the optimum yield from a fishery on a continuing basis, resulting in a negative economic impact on vessels permitted to fish in this fishery. Moreover, the rollover process and potential changes in trip limits were already outlined in the 2016 to 2018 specifications published December 28, 2015, that were provided for notice and comment rulemaking.

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

Dated: September 8, 2017.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 161222999–7413–01]

RIN 0648–XF610

Fisheries Off West Coast States; Modifications of the West Coast Commercial and Recreational Salmon Fisheries; Inseason Actions #5 Through #11

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

ACTION: Modification of fishing seasons.

This action is required by 50 CFR part 660 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment on this in-season action because it would be contrary to the public interest. If implementation of this in-season action is delayed to solicit prior public comment, the objective of the fishery management plan to achieve the optimum yield from the fishery could be compromised; deteriorating weather conditions during the latter part of the fishing year will reduce fishing effort and could prevent the annual quota from being fully harvested. This would conflict with the agency’s legal obligation under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to achieve the optimum yield from a fishery on a continuing basis, resulting in a negative economic impact on vessels permitted to fish in this fishery. Moreover, the rollover process and potential changes in trip limits were already outlined in the 2016 to 2018 specifications published December 28, 2015, that were provided for notice and comment rulemaking.

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

Dated: September 8, 2017.

Ellen K. Fitzpatrick,

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

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P
SUMMARY: NMFS announces seven inseason actions in the ocean salmon fisheries. These inseason actions modified the commercial and recreational salmon fisheries in the area from the U.S./Canada border to the U.S./Mexico border.

DATES: The effective dates for the inseason actions are set out in the heading Inseason Actions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Peggy Mundy at 206-526-4323.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

In the 2017 annual management measures for ocean salmon fisheries (82 FR 19630, April 28, 2017), NMFS announced the commercial and recreational fisheries in the area from the U.S./Canada border to the U.S./Mexico border, beginning May 1, 2017, and 2018 salmon fisheries opening earlier than May 1, 2018. NMFS is authorized to implement inseason management actions to modify fishing seasons and quotas as necessary to provide fishing opportunity while meeting management objectives for the affected species (50 CFR 660.409). Inseason actions in the salmon fishery may be taken directly by NMFS (50 CFR 660.409(a)—Fixed inseason management provisions) or upon consultation with the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and the appropriate State Directors (50 CFR 660.409(b)—Flexible inseason management provisions). The state management agencies that participated in the consultations described in this document were: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Management of the salmon fisheries is generally divided into two geographic areas: North of Cape Falcon (U.S./Canada border to Cape Falcon, OR) and south of Cape Falcon (Cape Falcon, OR, to the U.S./Mexico border). The inseason actions reported in this document affected fisheries north and south of Cape Falcon. All times mentioned refer to Pacific daylight time.

Inseason Actions

Inseason Action #5

Description of action: Inseason action #5 removed the landing and possession limit for Chinook salmon in the spring commercial salmon fishery from the U.S./Canada border to the Queets River, WA, which was previously set at 60 Chinook per vessel per week.

Effective dates: Inseason action #5 took effect on June 21, 2017, and remained in effect through June 30, 2017, the end of the spring fishery.

Reason and authorization for the action: The purpose of this action was to increase access to the available quota, as Chinook landings in the affected area were well below the level anticipated preseason. The Regional Administrator (RA) considered fishery effort and Chinook landings to date, and determined that this inseason action was necessary to meet the management objectives set preseason. Inseason actions to modify limited retention regulations are authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(ii).

Consultation date and participants: Consultation on inseason action #5 occurred on June 20, 2017. Representatives from NMFS, WDFW, ODFW, and the Council participated in this consultation.

Inseason Action #6

Description of action: Inseason action #6 extended the retention of Pacific halibut caught incidental to the commercial salmon fishery from the U.S./Canada border to the U.S./Mexico border, previously scheduled to end July 1, 2017. Inseason action #6 also changed the landing and possession ratio from one Pacific halibut per each two Chinook, to one Pacific halibut per each four Chinook, and changed the landing limit from 35 Pacific halibut per trip, to 10 Pacific halibut per trip.

Effective dates: Inseason action #6 took effect on July 1, 2017, and remained in effect until superseded by inseason action #10 on August 4, 2017.

Reason and authorization for the action: The purpose of this action was to allow access to remaining Pacific halibut allocation without exceeding the allocation. The RA considered fishery effort and Chinook and halibut landings to date, and determined that this inseason action was necessary to meet the management goals set preseason. Inseason actions to modify quotas and/or fishing seasons are authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(i), and inseason actions to modify limited retention regulations are authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(ii).

Consultation date and participants: Consultation on inseason action #6 occurred on June 20, 2017. Representatives from NMFS, WDFW, ODFW, CDFW, and the Council participated in this consultation.

Inseason Action #7

Description of action: Inseason action #7 increased the landing and possession limit for Chinook salmon in the summer commercial salmon fishery from the U.S./Canada border to Queets River, WA, from 60 Chinook per vessel per open period to 75 Chinook per vessel per open period.

Effective dates: Inseason action #7 took effect on July 21, 2017, and remains in effect through the end of the season, or until superseded by further inseason action.

Reason and authorization for the action: The purpose of this action was to increase access to the available quota, as Chinook landings in the affected area were well below the level anticipated preseason. The RA considered Chinook landings to date and fishery effort, and determined that this inseason action was necessary to meet the management objectives set preseason. Inseason actions to modify limited retention regulations are authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(ii).

Consultation date and participants: Consultation on inseason action #7 occurred on July 19, 2017. Representatives from NMFS, WDFW, ODFW, and the Council participated in this consultation.

Inseason Action #8

Description of action: Inseason action #8 increased the landing and possession limit for Chinook salmon in the summer commercial salmon fishery from the Queets River, WA, to Cape Falcon, OR, from 75 Chinook per vessel per open period to 150 Chinook per vessel per open period, and changed the open period from five days per week to seven days per week.

Effective dates: Inseason action #8 took effect on July 21, 2017, and remains in effect through the end of the season, or until superseded by further inseason action.

Reason and authorization for the action: The purpose of this action was to increase access to the available quota, as Chinook landings in the affected area were well below the level anticipated preseason. The RA considered Chinook landings to date and fishery effort, and determined that this inseason action was necessary to meet the management objectives set preseason. Inseason actions to modify quotas and/or fishing seasons are authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(i) and inseason actions to modify limited retention regulations are authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(ii).

Consultation date and participants: Consultation on inseason action #8 occurred on July 19, 2017. Representatives from NMFS, WDFW, ODFW, and the Council participated in this consultation.
Inseason Action #9

Description of action: Inseason action #9 modified the daily bag limit in the recreational fishery from Queets River, WA, to Leadbetter Point, WA, to allow retention of two fish per day, both of which could be Chinook; previously, the bag limit was two fish per day, only one of which could be a Chinook.

Effective dates: Inseason action #9 took effect July 22, 2017, and remains in effect through the end of the season, or until superseded by further inseason action.

Reason and authorization for the action: The purpose of this action was to increase access to the available quota, as Chinook landings in the affected area were well below the level anticipated preseason. The RA considered Chinook landings to date and fishery effort, and determined that this inseason action was necessary to meet the management objectives set preseason. Inseason actions to modify recreational bag limits are authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(ii).

Consultation date and participants: Consultation on inseason action #9 occurred on July 19, 2017. Representatives from NMFS, WDFW, ODFW, and the Council participated in this consultation.

Inseason Action #10

Description of action: Inseason action #10 closed retention of Pacific halibut caught incidental to the commercial salmon fishery from the U.S./Canada border to the U.S./Mexico border.

Effective dates: Inseason action #10 superseded inseason action #6 on August 4, 2017 and remains in effect through the end of the 2017 commercial salmon fishing season.

Reason and authorization for the action: This action was taken due to attainment of the 2017 Pacific halibut allocation authorized by the International Pacific Halibut Commission. The RA considered Pacific halibut landings to date, which indicated that approximately two percent of the allocation remained uncaught, and determined this was insufficient to allow halibut retention to continue without risk of exceeding the allocation. Inseason action to modify quotas and/or fishing seasons is authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(ii).

Consultation date and participants: Consultation on inseason action #10 occurred on August 3, 2017. Representatives from NMFS, WDFW, ODFW, CDFW, and the Council participated in this consultation.

Inseason Action #11

Description of action: Inseason action #11 rolled over unused Chinook quota from the spring commercial salmon fishery north of Cape Falcon, OR, to the summer commercial salmon fishery north of Cape Falcon, OR. This action added 2,205 Chinook to the summer quota set preseason at 18,000, resulting in an adjusted summer quota of 20,205 for the area north of Cape Falcon.

Additionally, inseason action #11 increased the subarea guideline for the commercial salmon fishery from the U.S./Canada border to Queets River, WA, from 7,200 to 10,870.

Effective dates: Inseason action #11 took effect August 3, 2017 and remains in effect through the end of the 2017 commercial salmon season.

Reason and authorization for the action: The purpose of this action was to allow increased access to available Chinook quota. The Council’s Salmon Technical Team (STT) calculated impacts on salmon stocks from the spring and summer fisheries, and advised that the transfer of quota would not result in increased impacts on affected salmon stocks and would not affect the overall quota set for commercial salmon fisheries north of Cape Falcon for 2017. The RA considered the report of the STT and the commercial salmon landings for the spring and summer seasons to date, and determined that this inseason action was necessary to meet the management objectives set preseason. Inseason action to modify quotas and/or fishing seasons is authorized by 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(i).

Consultation date and participants: Consultation on inseason action #11 occurred on August 3, 2017. Representatives from NMFS, WDFW, ODFW, CDFW, and the Council participated in this consultation.

All other restrictions and regulations remained in effect as announced for the 2017 ocean salmon fisheries and 2018 salmon fisheries opening prior to May 1, 2018 (82 FR 19631, April 28, 2017) and as modified by prior inseason actions. The RA determined that the best available information indicated that Chinook salmon abundance forecasts, Chinook and halibut landings, and expected fishery effort supported the above inseason actions recommended by the states of Washington, Oregon, and California. The states manage the fisheries in state waters adjacent to the areas of the U.S. exclusive economic zone in accordance with these federal actions. As provided by the inseason notice procedures of 50 CFR 660.411, actual notice of the described regulatory actions was given, prior to the time the action was effective, by telephone hotline numbers 206–526–6667 and 800–662–9825, and by U.S. Coast Guard Notice to Mariners broadcasts on Channel 16 VHF–FM and 2182 kHz.

Classification

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds that good cause exists for this notification to be issued without affording prior notice and opportunity for public comment under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) because such notification would be impracticable. As previously noted, actual notice of the regulatory actions was provided to fishers through telephone hotline and radio notification. These actions comply with the requirements of the annual management measures for ocean salmon fisheries (82 FR 19631, April 28, 2017), the Pacific Coast Salmon Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and regulations implementing the FMP, 50 CFR 660.409 and 660.411. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment was impracticable because NMFS and the state agencies had insufficient time to provide for prior notice and the opportunity for public comment between the time Chinook salmon and halibut catch and effort projections were developed and fisheries impacts were calculated, and the time the fishery modifications had to be implemented in order to ensure that fisheries are managed based on the best available scientific information, ensuring that conservation objectives and Endangered Species Act consultation standards are not exceeded. The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness required under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), as a delay in effectiveness of these actions would allow fishing at levels inconsistent with the goals of the FMP and the current management measures.

These actions are authorized by 50 CFR 660.409 and 660.411 and are exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: September 8, 2017.

Emily H. Menashes,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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