DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
50 CFR Part 679
[Docket No. 150818742–6210–02]
RIN 0648–XF206
Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 610 in the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; opening.

SUMMARY: NMFS is opening directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to fully use the A season allowance of the 2017 total allowable catch of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 6, 2017, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 10, 2017.

Comments must be received at the following address no later than 4:30 p.m., A.l.t., February 21, 2017.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by FDMS Docket Number NOAA–NMFS–2013–0147 (AA), finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in 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 January 31, 2017.

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(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.


Karen H. Abrams, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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 A season allowance of the 2017 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA is 2,232 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish of the (81 FR 14740; March 16, 2016) and inseason adjustment (81 FR 95063; December 27, 2016).

NMFS closed directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA under § 679.20(d)(1)(ii) on January 27, 2017 (82 FR 6821; January 31, 2017). As of February 2, 2017, NMFS has determined that approximately 2,225 metric tons of pollock remain in the A season directed fishing allowance for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(ii)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully utilize the A season allowance of the 2017 TAC of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is reopening directed fishing pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA, effective 1200 hours, A.l.t., February 6, 2017.

The Administrator, Alaska Region (Regional Administrator) considered the following factors in reaching this decision: (1) The current catch of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA and, (2) the harvest capacity and stated intent on future harvesting patterns of vessels in participating in this fishery.

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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in 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 January 31, 2017. This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

The A season allowance of the 2017 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA is 2,232 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish of the (81 FR 14740; March 16, 2016) and inseason adjustment (81 FR 95063; December 27, 2016).

NMFS closed directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA under § 679.20(d)(1)(ii) on January 27, 2017 (82 FR 6821; January 31, 2017). As of February 2, 2017, NMFS has determined that approximately 2,225 metric tons of pollock remain in the A season directed fishing allowance for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(ii)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully utilize the A season allowance of the 2017 TAC of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is reopening directed fishing pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA, effective 1200 hours, A.l.t., February 6, 2017.

The Administrator, Alaska Region (Regional Administrator) considered the following factors in reaching this decision: (1) The current catch of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA and, (2) the harvest capacity and stated intent on future harvesting patterns of vessels in participating in this fishery.

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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels less than 60 feet (18.3 m) LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear in 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 January 31, 2017. This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

The A season allowance of the 2017 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA is 2,232 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2016 and 2017 harvest specifications for groundfish of the (81 FR 14740; March 16, 2016) and inseason adjustment (81 FR 95063; December 27, 2016).

NMFS closed directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA under § 679.20(d)(1)(ii) on January 27, 2017 (82 FR 6821; January 31, 2017). As of February 2, 2017, NMFS has determined that approximately 2,225 metric tons of pollock remain in the A season directed fishing allowance for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.25(a)(1)(i), (a)(2)(ii)(C), and (a)(2)(iii)(D), and to fully utilize the A season allowance of the 2017 TAC of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA, NMFS is terminating the previous closure and is reopening directed fishing pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA, effective 1200 hours, A.l.t., February 6, 2017.

The Administrator, Alaska Region (Regional Administrator) considered the following factors in reaching this decision: (1) The current catch of pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA and, (2) the harvest capacity and stated intent on future harvesting patterns of vessels in participating in this fishery.

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 opening of directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 610 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 February 2, 2017.

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.

Without this inseason adjustment, NMFS could not allow the fishery for pollock in Statistical Area 610 of the GOA to be harvested in an expedient manner and in accordance with the regulatory schedule. Under § 679.25(c)(2), interested persons are invited to submit written comments on this action to the above address until February 21, 2017.

This action is required by § 679.25 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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


Karen H. Abrams,
Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.