

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cynthia Hanson, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9180; or Cynthia.Hanson@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS published a final rule for Framework Adjustment 3 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan 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 (October 1 through December 31).¹ The 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 2018, the initial Winter II quota is 3,822,816 lb (1,734 mt). The best available landings information indicates that 5,943,861 lb (2,696 mt) remain of the 10,820,000-lb (4,908-mt) Winter I quota. Consistent with Framework 3, the full amount of unused 2018 Winter I quota is being transferred to Winter II, resulting in a revised 2018 Winter II quota of 9,766,677 lb (4,430 mt). Because the amount transferred is between 5.5 and 6.0 million lb (2,495 to 2,722 mt), the Federal per trip possession limit will increase from 12,000 lb (5.4 mt) to 28,500 lb (13 mt), as outlined in the final rule that established the possession limit and quota rollover procedures for this year, published on December 22, 2017 (82 FR 60682).

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 under 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. This action transfers unused quota from Winter I Period to the remaining Winter II Period to make it accessible to the commercial scup fishery. 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 may reduce fishing effort, and could also 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 being applied here was the subject of notice and comment rulemaking, and the range of potential trip limit changes were outlined in the final 2018 scup specifications that were published December 22, 2017; which were developed through public notice and comment. Based on these considerations, NMFS further finds, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), good cause to waive the 30-day delayed effectiveness period for the reasons stated above.

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

Dated: September 18, 2018.

Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,
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. 170817779-8161-02]

RIN 0648-XG492

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Northern Rockfish in 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 northern rockfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2018 northern rockfish initial total allowable catch (ITAC) specified for the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs., Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 18, 2018, through 2400 hrs., A.l.t., December 31, 2018.

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 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 2018 northern rockfish ITAC specified for the BSAI is 5,185 metric tons as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (83 FR 8365, February 27, 2018).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that the 2018 northern rockfish ITAC in the BSAI will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 5,000 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 185 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. 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 northern rockfish in the BSAI.

While this closure is in effect 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)(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 directed fishery closure of northern rockfish 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 September 14, 2018.

¹ Effective May 21, 2018, the Winter II period start date was changed from November 1 to October 1 as a part of Framework Adjustment 12 (83 FR 17314; April 19, 2018).

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: September 18, 2018.

Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,
*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable
Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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