DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 160920866–7167–02]

RIN 0648–XF901

 Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 620 in 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 directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 620 in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowable catch of pollock for Statistical Area 620 in the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 23, 2018, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 10, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 907–586–7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: 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 closure of directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 620 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 22, 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.


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. 160920866–7167–02]

RIN 0648–XF904

 Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Trawl Catcher Vessels in the Western 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 directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the A season allowable catch of the 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 23, 2018, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., June 10, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 907–586–7228.


The A season allowable of the 2018 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA is 1,528 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (82 FR 12032, February 27, 2017) and inseason adjustment (82 FR 60327, December 20, 2017).

In accordance with §679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the A season allowable of the 2018 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 1,378 mt and is setting aside the remaining 150 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with §679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Western Regulatory Area of the GOA. After the effective date of this