

§ 300.27 Incidental catch and tuna retention requirements.

(a) *Tuna retention requirements for purse seine vessels.* Bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna caught in the Convention Area by a fishing vessel of the United States of class size 4–6 (more than 182 metric tons carrying capacity) using purse seine gear must be retained on board and landed, except for fish deemed unfit for human consumption for reasons other than size. This requirement shall not apply to the last set of a trip if the available well capacity is insufficient to accommodate the entire catch.

(b) *Release requirements for non-tuna species on purse seine vessels.* All purse seine vessels must release all shark, billfish, ray (not including mobulid rays, which are subject to paragraph (g) of this section), dorado (*Coryphaena hippurus*), and other non-tuna fish species, except those being retained for consumption aboard the vessel, as soon as practicable after being identified on board the vessel during the brailing operation.

(c) *Sea turtle handling and release.* All purse seine vessels must apply special sea turtle handling and release requirements, as follows:

(1) Whenever a sea turtle is sighted in the net, a speedboat shall be stationed close to the point where the net is lifted out of the water to assist in release of the sea turtle;

(2) If a sea turtle is entangled in the net, net roll shall stop as soon as the sea turtle comes out of the water and shall not resume until the sea turtle has been disentangled and released;

(3) If, in spite of the measures taken under paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(2) of this section, a sea turtle is accidentally brought on board the vessel alive and active, the vessel's engine shall be disengaged and the sea turtle shall be released as quickly as practicable;

(4) If a sea turtle brought on board under paragraph (c)(3) of this section is alive but comatose or inactive, the resuscitation procedures described in § 223.206(d)(1)(i)(B) of this title shall be used before release of the turtle.

(d) *Oceanic whitetip shark restrictions.* The crew, operator, or owner of a fishing vessel of the United States used to fish for HMS in the Convention Area shall be prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of an oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) and must release unharmed, to the extent practicable, all oceanic whitetip sharks when brought alongside the vessel.

(e) *Whale shark restrictions for purse seine vessels.* Owners, operators, and crew of fishing vessels of the United States commercially fishing for tuna in the Convention Area may not set or attempt to set a purse seine on or around a whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) if the animal is sighted prior to the commencement of the set or the attempted set.

(f) *Whale shark release.* The crew, operator, and owner of a fishing vessel of the United States commercially fishing for tuna in the Convention Area must release as soon as possible, any whale shark that is encircled in a purse seine net, and must ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure its safe release.

(g) *Mobulid ray restrictions.* The crew, operator, and owner of a U.S. commercial fishing vessel is prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, storing, landing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of a mobulid ray that is caught in the IATTC Convention Area, except as provided in the following sentence. In the case of any mobulid ray caught in the IATTC Convention Area on an observed purse seine vessel that is not seen during fishing operations and is delivered into the vessel hold, the mobulid ray may be stored on board and landed, but the vessel owner or operator must show the whole mobulid ray to the on-board observer at the point of landing for recording purposes, and then dispose of the mobulid ray at the direction of the responsible government authority. In U.S. ports the responsible governmental authority is the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement divisional office nearest to the port, or other authorized personnel. Mobulid rays that are caught and landed in this manner may not be sold or bartered, but may be donated for purposes of domestic human consumption consistent with relevant laws and policies.

(h) *Mobulid ray handling and release.* The crew, operator, and owner of a U.S. commercial fishing vessel must promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, any mobulid ray (whether live or dead) caught in the IATTC Convention Area as soon as it is seen in the net, on the hook, or on the deck, without compromising the safety of any persons. If a mobulid ray is live when caught, the crew, operator, and owner of a U.S. commercial fishing vessel must use the release procedures described in the following two paragraphs.

(1) No mobulid ray may be gaffed, no mobulid ray may be lifted by the gill slits or spiracles or by using bind wire against or inserted through the body,

and no holes may be punched through the bodies of mobulid ray (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the mobulid ray).

(2) Applicable to purse seine operations, large mobulid rays must be brailed out of the net by directly releasing the mobulid ray from the brailer into the ocean. Large mobulid rays that cannot be released without compromising the safety of persons or the mobulid ray before being landed on deck, must be returned to the water as soon as possible, either utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the boat, or lowered with a sling or net, using a crane if available. The minimum size for the sling or net must be at least 25 feet in diameter.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 150818742–6210–02]

RIN 0648–XE771

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Dusky Rockfish in the West Yakutat District 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 dusky rockfish in the West Yakutat District of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2016 total allowable catch of dusky rockfish in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 27, 2016, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 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 dusky rockfish in the West Yakutat District of the GOA is 275 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)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2016 TAC of dusky rockfish in the West Yakutat District of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 270 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 5 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 dusky rockfish in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

After the effective date of this closure 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 closure of directed fishing for dusky rockfish in the West Yakutat District 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 July 26, 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 is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: July 27, 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. 150818742-0610-02]

RIN 0648-XE772

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the West Yakutat District 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 ocean perch in the West Yakutat District of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2016 total allowable catch of Pacific ocean perch in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 27, 2016, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 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 in the West Yakutat District of the GOA is 2,847 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)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region,

NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2016 TAC of Pacific ocean perch in the West Yakutat District of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 2,747 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 100 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 Pacific ocean perch in the West Yakutat District of the GOA.

After the effective date of this closure 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 closure of directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the West Yakutat District 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 July 26, 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 is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: July 27, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

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