

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

[Docket No. 961126334-7025-02; I.D. 071597A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska, Pelagic Shelf Rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pelagic shelf rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the pelagic shelf rockfish total allowable catch (TAC) in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 15, 1997, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS 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. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The pelagic shelf rockfish TAC in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (62 FR 8179, February 24, 1997) as 990 metric tons (mt), determined in accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(ii).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the pelagic shelf rockfish TAC in the Eastern Regulatory Area will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 890 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 will soon be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting

directed fishing for pelagic shelf rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts for applicable gear types may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1997 TAC for pelagic shelf rockfish in the Eastern Regulatory Area of the GOA. Providing prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action is impracticable and contrary to public interest. The fleet will soon take the directed fishing allowance for pelagic shelf rockfish. Further delay would only result in overharvest and disrupt the FMP's objective of allowing incidental catch to be retained throughout the year. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of this action cannot be delayed for 30 days. Accordingly, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d), a delay in the effective date is hereby waived.

This action is required by 50 CFR 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: July 15, 1997.

Bruce Morehead,

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. 961126334-7025-02; I.D. 071597B]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska, Offshore Pelagic Shelf Rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for offshore pelagic shelf rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the offshore pelagic shelf rockfish total allowable catch (TAC) in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 15, 1997, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS 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. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The offshore pelagic shelf rockfish TAC in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the GOA (62 FR 8179, February 24, 1997) as 3,320 metric tons (mt), determined in accordance with § 679.20 (c)(3)(ii).

In accordance with § 679.20 (d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the offshore pelagic shelf rockfish TAC in the Central Regulatory Area will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 3,100 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 220 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 will soon be reached.

Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for offshore pelagic shelf rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts for applicable gear types may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. It must be implemented immediately to prevent overharvesting the 1997 TAC for offshore pelagic shelf rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. Providing prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action is impracticable and contrary to public interest. The fleet will soon take the directed fishing allowance for offshore pelagic shelf rockfish. Further delay would only result in overharvest and disrupt the FMP's objective of allowing incidental catch to be retained throughout the year. NMFS finds for good cause that the implementation of