

50 CFR Part 676

[I.D. 060496A]

RIN 0648-A157

Limited Access Management of Federal Fisheries In and Off of Alaska; Quota Shares and Individual Fishing Quota

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

ACTION: Notice of availability of amendments to fishery management plans; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has submitted Amendment 42 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Groundfish and Amendment 42 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery. The Council recommended these amendments to alleviate certain restrictions in the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program. If approved, these FMP amendments would allow quota shares (QS) and IFQ assigned to vessels in larger size categories to be used on smaller vessels. The Council intends these amendments to increase the flexibility of QS use and transfer while maintaining the

management goals of the IFQ Program and, thus, provide small boat fishermen with more opportunities to improve the profitability of their operations. Comments are requested from the public.

DATES: Comments on the proposed FMP amendments must be received by August 6, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Ronald J. Berg, Chief, Fisheries Management Division, Attn: Lori Gravel, Alaska Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802. Copies of the proposed Amendments, and the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis for this action may be obtained from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Suite 306, 605 West 4th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501-2252.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James Hale, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

The Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act) requires that each Regional Fishery Management Council submit any fishery management plan or plan amendment it prepares to NMFS for review and approval, disapproval, or partial disapproval. The Magnuson Act also

requires that NMFS, upon reviewing the plan or amendment, must immediately publish a notice that the plan or amendment is available for public review and comment.

Amendment 42 to each of the FMPs governing Federal fisheries in and off of Alaska would redefine IFQ vessel categories to allow QS and IFQ assigned to larger vessel categories to be used on smaller vessels. An exception to this change would prohibit QS or IFQ assigned to vessel category B in regulatory areas 2C (for halibut) and east of 140° W. long. (for sablefish) to be used on vessels less than 60 ft (18.3 m) length overall except in QS blocks equivalent to less than 5,000 lb (2.3 mt).

NMFS will consider the public comments received during the comment period in determining whether to approve the proposed amendments. The proposed regulations are scheduled to be published within 15 days of this document.

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

Dated: June 6, 1996.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 96-14927 Filed 6-7-96; 3:52 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F