

percent of the Federal commercial quota of 2,388,611 lb (1,083 mt) for the 2008 Winter I period will be harvested by March 15, 2008. Therefore, to maintain the integrity of the 2009 Winter I period quota by avoiding quota overages, the commercial scup possession limit will be reduced from 30,000 lb (13,608 kg) to 1,000 lb (454 kg) of scup per trip. This possession limit will remain in effect until the end of the Winter I period (through April 30, 2008) or until the Winter I quota allocation has been fully harvested, whichever ever occurs first.

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 10, 2008.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

*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. 071106671-8010-02]

RIN 0648-XG28

Fisheries of the Economic Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Shallow-Water Species Fishery by Vessels Using Trawl Gear 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 species that comprise the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the Gulf of Alaska

(GOA). This action is necessary because the first seasonal apportionment of the 2008 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 10, 2008, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Hogan, 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 first seasonal apportionment of the 2008 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the shallow-water species fishery in the GOA is 450 metric tons as established by the 2008 and 2009 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (73 FR 10562, February 27, 2008), for the period 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 20, 2008, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 1, 2008.

In accordance with § 679.21(d)(7)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined that the first seasonal apportionment of the 2008 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the trawl shallow-water species fishery in the GOA has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in the GOA. The species and species groups that comprise the shallow-water species fishery are pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, skates and "other species." This inseason adjustment does not apply to fishing for pollock by vessels using pelagic trawl gear in those portions of the GOA open to directed

fishing for pollock. This inseason adjustment does not apply to vessels fishing under a cooperative quota permit in the cooperative fishery in the Rockfish Pilot Program for the Central 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 the shallow-water species fishery by vessels using trawl gear in 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 March 7, 2008.

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 § 679.21 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 7, 2008.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

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