

[Federal Register: May 12, 1994]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE 50 CFR Parts 671, 672, 675, and 676 [I.D. 050494B]  
Pacific Halibut Fisheries; Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska; Groundfish of the  
Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands; King and Tanner Crab of the Bering Sea and  
Aleutian Islands; Limited Access Management of Federal Fisheries In and Off of  
Alaska

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.

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SUMMARY: The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has submitted  
Amendment 23 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Groundfish Fishery  
of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (BSAI), Amendment 28 to the FMP  
for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), and Amendment 4 to the FMP for the  
Commercial King and Tanner Crab Fisheries in the BSAI for review by the  
Secretary of Commerce (Secretary). The amendments would establish a moratorium  
on the entry of new vessels into these fisheries. Comments are requested from  
the public. Copies of the amendments may be obtained from the Council (see  
ADDRESSES).

DATES: Comments on the FMP amendments must be submitted by July 8, 1994.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the FMP amendments must be submitted to Ronald J. Berg,  
Chief, Fisheries Management Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668,  
Juneau, AK 99802 (Attn: Lori Gravel).

Copies of the amendments and the environmental assessment/ regulatory  
impact review/initial regulatory flexibility analysis prepared for the  
amendments are available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council,  
P.O. Box 103136, Anchorage, AK 99510; telephone: 907-271-2809.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David C. Ham, Fishery Management Biologist,  
Alaska Region, NMFS at 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management  
Act (Magnuson Act) requires that each Regional Fishery Management Council  
submit any FMP or FMP amendment it prepares to the Secretary for review and  
approval, disapproval, or partial disapproval. The Magnuson Act also requires  
that the Secretary, upon reviewing the plan or amendment, immediately publish  
a notice in the Federal Register that the plan or amendment is available for  
public review and comment. The Secretary will consider the public comments  
received during the comment period in determining whether to approve these  
amendments.

The three FMPs and a companion regulatory amendment for the halibut  
fishery would establish a 3-year moratorium on the entry of new vessels into  
the groundfish fishery of the GOA and BSAI, the king and Tanner crab fishery  
of the BSAI, and halibut fishery in and off of Alaska. The purpose of the  
moratorium is to curtail increases in harvesting capacity and provide industry  
stability, while the Council assesses long-term management alternatives for  
its comprehensive management plan.

The moratorium would be implemented through the issuance of Federal vessel  
permits for groundfish in the GOA and BSAI, Federal vessel permits for crab in  
the BSAI, and International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) vessel permits  
for halibut in the Convention waters in and off of Alaska. Vessel permits for  
these fisheries would be issued only to vessels that had a historical landing  
in a moratorium fishery from January 1, 1980, to February 9, 1992.

The companion regulatory amendment would effect changes to rules governing

the harvest of Pacific halibut by U.S. fishermen in and off of Alaska. The Council does not have an FMP for halibut. The domestic fishery for halibut in and off Alaska is managed by the IPHC, as provided by the Convention between the United States and Canada for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the Northern Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea (Convention), and the Northern Pacific Halibut Act. The Convention and the Halibut Act authorize the respective Regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Magnuson Act to develop regulations that are in addition to, but not in conflict with, regulations adopted by the IPHC affecting the U.S. halibut fishery. Under this authority, the Council may develop, for approval by the Secretary, limited access policies for the Pacific halibut fishery in Convention waters in and off of Alaska. ``Convention waters'' means the maritime areas off the west coast of the United States and Canada as described in Article I of the Convention (see 16 U.S.C. 773(d)). The Council acted under this authority in recommending its proposed moratorium for the halibut fishery. Regulations governing the harvesting of Pacific halibut are set forth at 50 CFR parts 301 and 676.

Regulations proposed by the Council to implement these amendments are scheduled to be published within 15 days of this document.

Dated: May 9, 1994. David S. Crestin, Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 94-11549 Filed 5-9-94; 2:26 pm] BILLING CODE 3510-22-P