

fishery in area 542 will remain open until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 29, 2003. The first HLA fishery in area 543 will remain open until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 28, 2003. The second directed fisheries in the HLA in area 542 and area 543 open effective 1200 hrs, A.l.t., January 31, 2003. The second HLA fishery in area 542 will remain open until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 5, 2003. The second HLA fishery in area 543 will remain open until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 4, 2003.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew Smoker, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (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 interim TAC for other gear in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea is 2,815 metric tons (mt) as established by the Interim 2003 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish (67 FR 78739, December 26, 2002). See §§ 679.20(c)(2)(ii) and 679.20(a)(8)(ii).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the interim other gear TAC for Atka mackerel in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 2,215 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 600 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 soon will be reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the Eastern Aleutian District and the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(C), the Regional Administrator is opening the first directed fisheries for Atka mackerel within the HLA in areas 542 and 543 at 48 hours after the closure of the area 541 Atka mackerel directed fishery. The Regional Administrator has established the opening date for the second HLA directed fisheries as 48 hours after the last closure of the first HLA fisheries in either 542 or 543. Consequently, NMFS

is opening and closing directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the HLA of areas 542 and 543 in accordance with the periods listed under the DATES section of this notice.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii), vessels using trawl gear for directed fishing for Atka mackerel have previously registered with NMFS to fish in the HLA fisheries in areas 542 and/or 543. NMFS has randomly assigned each vessel to the directed fishery or fisheries for which they have registered. NMFS has notified each vessel owner as to which fishery each vessel has been assigned by NMFS.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(1), the HLA portion of the interim TAC in areas 542 and 543 are 7,382 mt and 6,110 mt respectively. Based on those apportionments and the proportion of the number of vessels in each fishery compared to the total number of vessels participating in the HLA directed fishery for area 542 or 543, the harvest limit for each HLA directed fishery in areas 542 and 543 are as follows: For the first directed fishery in area 542, 3,691 mt, for the first directed fishery in area 543, 3,055 mt, for the second directed fishery in area 542, 3,691 mt, for the second directed fishery in area 543, 3,055 mt. In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(E), the Regional Administrator has established the closure dates of the Atka mackerel directed fisheries in the HLA for areas 542 and 543 based on the amount of the harvest limit and the estimated fishing capacity of the vessels assigned to the respective fisheries. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the HLA of areas 542 and 543 in accordance with the dates and times listed under the **DATES** section of this notice.

#### Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, 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 contrary to the public interest. This requirement is contrary to the public interest as it would delay the closure of the fisheries, lead to exceeding the interim TACs, and therefore reduce the public's ability to use and enjoy the fishery resource.

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: January 15, 2003.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 03-1376 Filed 1-16-03; 3:13 pm]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 021212306-2306-01; I.D. 011402B]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 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 pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the first seasonal allowance of the pollock interim total allowable catch (TAC) for Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 21, 2003, until superseded by the notice of Final 2003 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish of the GOA, which will be published in the **Federal Register**.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mary Furuness, 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 allowance of the pollock interim TAC in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA is 1,222 metric tons (mt) as established by the interim 2003 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (67 FR 78733, December 26, 2002).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the first seasonal allowance of the pollock interim TAC in

Statistical Area 630 will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 622 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 600 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 pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

Maximum retainable amounts 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. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, 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 contrary to the public interest. This requirement is contrary to the public interest as it would delay the closure of the fishery, lead to exceeding the interim TAC, and therefore reduce the public's ability to use and enjoy the fishery resource.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA 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 section 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: January 15, 2003.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 03-1375 Filed 1-16-03; 3:13 pm]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 021212307-2307-01; I.D. 011403C]

#### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Atka Mackerel Lottery in Areas 542 and 543

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

**ACTION:** Notification.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is notifying registered vessels of their assignments for the A season Atka mackerel fishery in harvest limit area (HLA) 542 and/or 543 of the Aleutian Islands subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to allow the harvest of the A season HLA limits established for area 542 and area 543 pursuant to the interim 2003 harvest specifications for groundfish.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 22, 2003, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 15, 2003.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Andrew Smoker, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (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.

In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(A), all vessels using trawl gear for directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the HLA are required to register with NMFS. In accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(A)(1), all vessels using trawl gear for directed fishing for Atka mackerel in the HLA that wish to participate in the A season HLA fishery must register with NMFS by 4:30 pm, A.l.t. on the first working day following January 1. Eight vessels have registered with NMFS to fish in the A season HLA fisheries in areas 542 and/or 543. In order to reduce the amount of daily catch in the HLA by about half and to disperse the fishery over time and in accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii)(B), the Administrator, Alaska Region,

NMFS, has randomly assigned each vessel to the HLA directed fishery for Atka mackerel for which they have registered and is now notifying each vessel of its assignment.

Vessels that will participate in the first HLA directed fishery in area 542 and/or the second HLA directed fishery in area 543 in accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii) are as follows: Federal Fishery Permit number (FFP) 3423 Alaska Warrior, FFP 2733 Seafreeze Alaska, FFP 2134 Ocean Peace, and FFP 3819 Alaska Spirit.

Vessels that will participate in the first HLA directed fishery in area 543 and/or the second HLA directed fishery in area 542 in accordance with § 679.20(a)(8)(iii) are as follows: FFP 4093 Alaska Victory, FFP 2443 Alaska Juris, FFP 3400 Alaska Ranger, and FFP 3835 Seafisher.

#### Classification

This action responds to the best available information. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds that the need to immediately notify each vessel of its assignment to allow the harvest of the A season HLA fisheries in area 542 and area 543 constitutes 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)(3)(B) and 50 CFR 679.20(a)(8)(iii), as such procedures would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. This notice merely advises the owners of these vessels of the results of a random assignment required by regulation. Similarly, the need to implement these measures in a timely fashion and to notify each vessel of their assignment to allow the harvest of the A season HLA limits established for area 542 and area 543 constitutes good cause to find that the effective date 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 §§ 679.20 and 679.22 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: January 15, 2003.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

*Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*  
[FR Doc. 03-1379 Filed 1-21-03; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3510-22-S**