

declines below 5,650.9 metric tons (mt), the Council will review the status of the fishery, taking into consideration:

- (i) The changes in gross tonnage that have and are likely to occur in the transfer of limited entry permits;
- (ii) The actual harvesting capacity as experienced in the current fishery in comparison to the capacity goal;
- (iii) Comments of the CPSMT;
- (iv) Any other relevant factors related to maintaining the capacity goal.

(2) Following its review, the Council will recommend to NMFS whether additional permit(s) should be issued and if the new permit(s) should be temporary or permanent. The issuance of new permit(s) shall be based on the following:

- (i) The qualifying criteria in paragraph (b) of this section, but vessels that were issued a permit before December 31, 2000, are not eligible.
- (ii) If no vessel meets the qualifying criteria in paragraph (b), then the permit(s) will be issued to the vessel(s) with total landings nearest 100 mt during the qualifying period of paragraph (b).
- (iii) No vessel will be issued a permit under this paragraph (h) that is currently registered for use with a permit.

(3) The Regional Administrator will review the Council's recommendation and determine whether issuing additional permit(s) is consistent with the FMP and with paragraph (h)(2) of this section. If issuing additional permit(s) is appropriate, the Regional Administrator will:

- (i) Issue the appropriate number of permits consistent with the Council's recommendation; and
- (ii) Publish a document in the **Federal Register** notifying the public that new permits or a new permit has been issued, the conditions attached to any permit, and the reasons for the action.

4. Section 660.514 is revised to read as follows:

§ 660.514 Transferability.

(a) *General.* (1) The SFD will process applications for transferring limited entry permits to a different owner and/or to a different vessel according to this section.

(2) After January 27, 2003, the SFD will issue a limited entry permit to the owner of each vessel permitted to participate in the limited entry fishery for CPS. This permit will replace the existing permit and will include the gross tonnage of the vessel, which will constitute an endorsement for that vessel for the purpose of regulating the transfer of limited entry permits.

(b) *Criteria.* (1) When the aggregate gross tonnage of all vessels participating in the limited entry fishery is at or below 5,650.9 mt, a permit may be transferred to a different owner or to a different vessel in the following circumstances only:

(i) A permit may be transferred to a vessel without a permit if the vessel without a permit has a comparable capacity to the capacity on the permit or is less than comparable capacity on the permit.

(ii) When a permit is transferred to a vessel without a permit that has less gross tonnage than that of the permitted vessel, the excess gross tonnage may not be separated from the permit and applied to a second vessel.

(iii) A permit may be transferred to a vessel without a permit that is of greater than comparable capacity only if two or more permits are transferred to the vessel without a permit to equal the gross tonnage of the vessel. The number of permits required will be determined by adding together the comparable capacity of all permits being transferred. Any gross tonnage in excess of that needed for a vessel remains with the permit.

(2) When a vessel with multiple permits leaves the fishery, the permits may be sold separately and applied to other vessels according to the criteria in this section.

(c) *Stipulations.* (1) The gross tonnage endorsement of a permit is integral to the permit for the duration of the permit, regardless of the gross tonnage of any vessel to which the permit is transferred.

(2) Permits may be used only on the vessel for which they are registered by the SFD. All permits that authorize a vessel to operate in the limited entry fishery must be on board the vessel during any fishing trip on which CPS is harvested or is on board.

(3) A permit may be transferred only once during a calendar year.

(d) *Vessel alterations.* (1) A permitted vessel's length, breadth, or depth may be altered to increase the gross tonnage of the vessel only if the aggregate gross tonnage of all vessels participating in the limited entry fishery equals, or is below 5,650.9 mt, and only under the following conditions:

(i) The gross tonnage of the altered vessel, calculated according to the formula in 46 CFR 69.209(a), does not exceed 110 percent of the vessel's original gross tonnage endorsement, and

(ii) A new certificate of documentation is obtained from the U.S. Coast Guard or State. Modifications exceeding 110 percent of the vessel's gross tonnage endorsement will require

registration of the vessel under an additional permit or permits or under a permit with a sufficient gross tonnage endorsement.

(2) A copy of the certificate of documentation indicating changes in length, depth, or breadth must be provided to the SFD.

(3) The revised gross tonnage will not be valid as an endorsement until a revised permit is issued by the SFD.

(e) *Applications.* (1) All requests for the transfer of a limited entry permit will be made to the SFD in writing and shall contain the following information:

- (i) Name, address, and phone number of the owner of the permitted vessel.
- (ii) Name of the permitted vessel and documentation number of the vessel.
- (iii) Name, address, and phone number of the owner of the vessel to which the permit is to be transferred.
- (iv) Name and documentation number of the vessel to which the permit is to be transferred.

(v) Signature(s) of the owner(s) of the vessels participating in the transfer.

(vi) Any other information that the SFD may request.

(2) No permit transfer is effective until the transfer has been authorized by the SFD.

(f) *Capacity reduction.* (1) When the aggregate gross tonnage of the limited entry fleet reaches 5,933.5 mt, a permit may be transferred to a vessel without a permit only if the vessel without a permit is of the same or less gross tonnage.

(2) When the aggregate gross tonnage of the limited entry fleet reaches 5,933.5 mt, alterations in the length, depth, or breadth of a permitted vessel may not result in an increase in the gross tonnage of the vessel.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 021212307-2307-01; I.D. 012103F]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Shortraker/Rougheye and Northern Rockfish in the Bering Sea Subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Community Development Quota (CDQ) reserve amounts of shortraker/rougheye rockfish and northern rockfish in the Bering Sea subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2003 interim CDQ reserve amounts of shortraker/rougheye rockfish and northern rockfish in this area.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), January 22, 2003, until superseded by the notice of Final 2003 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the BSAI, 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 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 2003 interim CDQ reserve amounts of shortraker/rougheye rockfish and northern rockfish in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI are 2 metric tons (mt) and .25 mt, respectively, as established by the Interim 2003 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish in the BSAI (67 FR 78739, December 26, 2002).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2003 interim CDQ reserve amounts of shortraker/rougheye rockfish and northern rockfish in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI will be necessary as incidental catch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries for the 2003 fishing year. Consequently, the Regional Administrator is establishing directed fishing allowances of zero mt. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for CDQ reserve amounts of shortraker/rougheye rockfish and northern rockfish in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI.

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 CDQ reserve amounts, 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: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: January 21, 2003.

Richard W. Surdi

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. 021212307-2307-01; I.D. 011503C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Rock Sole Sideboard Limit in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for rock sole by catcher processors that are listed under the American Fisheries Act (AFA) in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the interim 2003 sideboard limit of rock sole specified for listed AFA catcher processors in the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time, January 29, 2003, until superseded by the notice of Final 2003 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish for the BSAI, 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 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 part 679.

The interim 2003 sideboard limit of rock sole specified for listed AFA catcher processors in the BSAI is 359 metric tons (mt) as established by the interim 2003 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (67 FR 78739, December 26, 2002).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iv), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the interim 2003 sideboard limit of rock sole specified for listed AFA catcher processors will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of zero mt, and is setting aside the 359 mt of the interim 2003 sideboard limit of rock sole specified for listed AFA catcher processors as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for rock sole by listed AFA catcher processors in the BSAI.

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 sideboard limit for listed AFA catcher processors, 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