

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 961107312-7012-02; I.D. 021897C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Inshore Component Pollock in the Bering Sea Subarea

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component in the Bering Sea subarea (BS) of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the first seasonal allowance of the pollock total allowable catch (TAC) apportioned to vessels harvesting pollock for processing by the inshore component in the BS.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 19, 1997, until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 15, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: David Ham, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive

economic zone is managed by NMFS 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. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and CFR part 679.

In accordance with § 679.20(c)(3)(iii), the first seasonal allowance of pollock for vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component in the BS was established by the Final 1997 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish as 164,627 metric tons (mt). The Final 1997 Specifications were published in the Federal Register on February 18, 1997 (62 FR 7168).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the first seasonal allowance of pollock TAC specified for vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component in the BS soon will be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 150,127 mt, and is setting aside the remaining

14,500 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 pollock by vessels catching pollock for processing by the inshore component in the BS. This closure is effective from 1200 hrs, A.l.t., February 19, 1997, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., April 15, 1997. Under § 679.20(a)(5)(i), the second seasonal allowance of pollock TAC will become available for directed fishing at 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 1.

Maximum retainable bycatch amounts for applicable gear types may be found in the regulations at § 679.20(e) and (f).

Classification

This action is required by § 679.20, and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: February 19, 1997.

Gary Matlock,

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

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