

630 of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the B season allowance of the pollock total allowable catch (TAC) for Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 10, 2003, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., August 25, 2003.

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 B season allowance of the pollock TAC in Statistical Area 630 is 1,031 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2003 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (68 FR 9924, March 3, 2003). In accordance with § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B) the Administrator,

Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) hereby reduces the B season pollock TAC by 174 mt, the amount of the harvest previously taken in excess of the A season pollock allowance in Statistical Area 630. The B season allowance of pollock TAC in Statistical Area 630 is 857 mt (1,031 mt minus 174 mt).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator has determined that the B season allowance of the pollock TAC in Statistical Area 630 is necessary as incidental catch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. Consequently, the Regional Administrator establishes the B season directed fishing allowance as zero. 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 (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 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 TAC, and therefore reduce the public's ability to use and enjoy the fishery resource.

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 section 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 7, 2003.

Richard W. Surdi,

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