

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.
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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