

The impacts of the proposed action on these operations will be minor. The average gross revenues from statistical area 655430 are minor compared to overall small entity average gross revenues over the course of the year. They are also relatively minor compared to their total revenues from fishing activity in the last 2 weeks of March. These vessels likely would be able to alter their operations to continue their fishing activity elsewhere in the second half of March and, therefore, actual revenue loss should be much less than the average revenue from the closure area. Thus, the average gross revenues overstate the total adverse impact of the proposed rule on small entities.

An IRFA should include a description of any significant alternatives to the proposed rule that accomplish the stated objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and any other applicable statutes and that would minimize any significant economic impact of the proposed rule on small entities. Two alternatives that would have had less adverse impacts on small entities were considered. Alternative 1, the status quo alternative, would not have imposed restrictions on groundfish fishing in this area. This alternative was rejected because it created an unacceptably high risk of loss of experimental pot gear and consequent reduction in the statistical power of the experiment. This could have reduced the value of the experimental results for management purposes. Alternative 2 would have only restricted trawling in the closure

area. This alternative was rejected because of concerns that, with no trawling in the closure area, hook-and-line and pot gear fishermen would enter in increasing numbers with consequent increased removals of Pacific cod that might be interpreted by the experiment as a trawl effect. Moreover, this alternative could have led to increased risk of gear conflicts between trawl and hook-and-line and pot gear following the end of the closure, as pot and hook-and-line gear vessels moved into the area closed to trawling but historically fished with trawl gear. Finally, the closure area under this alternative differed in its dimensions from the closure area in this proposed rule; these differences were introduced to reduce the adverse impact on small trawl entities under the proposed rule.

#### List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 679

Alaska, Fisheries, Recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

Dated: January 16, 2003.

**Rebecca Lent,**

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For the reasons discussed in the preamble, 50 CFR part 679 is proposed to be amended as follows:

#### PART 679—FISHERIES OF THE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE OFF ALASKA

1. The authority citation for 50 CFR part 679 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*, 1801 *et seq.*, and 3631 *et seq.*

2. In § 679.22, paragraph (a)(11) is revised to read as follows:

#### § 679.22 Closures.

\* \* \* \* \*

(a) \* \* \*

(11) *Cape Sarichef Research Restriction Area (effective through March 31, 2006)*—(i) *Description of Cape Sarichef Research Restriction Area.* The Cape Sarichef Research Restriction Area is all waters located outside of the 10 nm no trawl area around Cape Sarichef, as described in Tables 4 and 5 to this part, and inside the boundary of the following coordinates joined in order by straight lines (Figure 21 to part 679):

54°30' N lat., 165°14' W long.;

54°35' N lat., 165°26' W long.;

54°48' N lat., 165°04' W long.;

54°44' N lat., 164°56' W long.; and,

54°30' N lat., 165°14' W long.

(ii) *Closure.* The Cape Sarichef Research Restriction Area is closed from March 15 through March 31 to directed fishing for groundfish by vessels named on a Federal Fisheries Permit issued under § 679.4(b) and using trawl, pot, or hook-and-line gear.

\* \* \* \* \*

3. Figure 21 to part 679 is added to read as follows:

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