

have resulted in a decrease in revenues to individual vessels.

Processors

As of mid-2003, there were 9 processors that participated in the surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries, plus 10 companies that bought ocean quahogs directly from vessels from within the State of Maine. Of the nine processors, approximately six are responsible for the vast majority of purchases in the ex-vessel market and sale of processed clam products in appropriate wholesale markets. Impacts to surfclam and ocean quahog processors would most likely mirror the impacts of the various quotas to vessels as discussed above. Revenues earned by processors would be derived from the wholesale market for clam products, and since a large number of substitute products (i.e., other food products) are available, the demand for processed clam products is likely to be price-dependent.

Allocation Holders

In 2003, surfclam allocation holders totaled 102, while 63 firms or individuals held ocean quahog allocation. If the recommended quotas are accepted, i.e., a slight increase of 4.6 percent for surfclams, an 11.1-percent increase for ocean quahogs, and no change from the 2003 quota for Maine mahogany ocean quahogs, it is likely that impacts to allocation holders or buyers would be minimal. Theoretically, increases in quota would most likely benefit those who purchase quota (through lower prices (values)) and negatively impact sellers of quota because of reduction in value. Decreases in quota would most likely have an opposite effect.

Reporting and Recordkeeping Requirements

This proposed rule would not impose any new reporting, recordkeeping, or other compliance requirements. Therefore, the costs of compliance would remain unchanged.

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

Dated: October 17, 2003.

Rebecca Lent,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 031009255-3255-01; I.D. 092503A]

RIN 0648-AQ88

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Revision to the Management of "Other Species" Community Development Quota

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

ACTION: Proposed rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This proposed rule would modify the management of the "other species" Community Development Quota (CDQ) reserve by eliminating specific allocations of "other species" to individual CDQ managing organizations (CDQ groups) and instead allow NMFS to manage the "other species" CDQ reserve with the general limitations used to manage the catch of non-CDQ groundfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action also would eliminate the CDQ non-specific reserve and make other changes to improve the clarity and consistency of CDQ Program regulations. This action is necessary to improve NMFS' ability to effectively administer the CDQ Program. It is intended to further the goals and objectives of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) with respect to this program.

DATES: Comments must be received by November 6, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be sent to Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802, Attn: Lori Durall, or delivered to room 420 of the Federal Building, 709 West 9th Street, Juneau, AK. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to 907-586-7557. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet. Copies of the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (EA/RIR/IRFA) prepared for this action may be obtained from the same address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Obren Davis, 907-586-7228 or Obren.Davis@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fisheries in the exclusive

economic zone (EEZ) of the BSAI are managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (FMP). The Council prepared the FMP pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), 16 U.S.C. 1801, *et seq.* Regulations governing U.S. fisheries and implementing the FMP appear at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679.

Management Background and Need for Action

The CDQ Program allocates groundfish, prohibited species, crab, and Pacific halibut to six CDQ groups representing 65 western Alaska communities. With limited exceptions, NMFS allocates 7.5 percent of each BSAI groundfish Total Allowable Catch (TAC) category to a CDQ reserve for that TAC category. Each CDQ reserve is further apportioned among the six CDQ groups. The purpose of the CDQ Program is to provide the means for starting or supporting commercial fisheries business activities that will result in ongoing, regionally based, fisheries-related economic benefits for residents of participating communities. CDQ groups use the proceeds derived from the harvest of CDQ allocations to fund a variety of fisheries-related projects and provide training and educational opportunities to residents of participating communities.

The CDQ Program began in 1992 with the allocation of 7.5 percent of the BSAI pollock TAC. Allocations of sablefish and halibut were added in 1995. The Council recommended expanding the CDQ Program in 1995 and NMFS implemented the multispecies CDQ Program in 1998, combining the existing pollock, halibut, and fixed gear sablefish CDQ fisheries with additional allocations of a variety of crab, groundfish, and prohibited species. The pollock CDQ allocation increased to 10 percent of the BSAI pollock TAC in 1999 under the American Fisheries Act (Public Law 105-277). Management of crab CDQ is delegated to the State of Alaska and will not be mentioned hereafter.

As part of its original design, the multispecies CDQ Program required a higher level of accountability of allocated species than any other Alaska groundfish fishery that NMFS was then managing. Other limited access programs in place at the time, including the existing CDQ fisheries and the fixed gear halibut and sablefish Individual Fishing Quota fisheries, were target fishery-based programs that did not