

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 9712229312-7312-01; I.D. 093098B]

Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; End of the Primary Season and Resumption of Trip Limits for the Shore-based Whiting Sector

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

ACTION: Fishing restrictions; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the end of the 1998 regular season for the shore-based fishery for Pacific whiting (whiting), and resumption of a 10,000-lb (4,536-kg) trip limit, at 2 p.m. (local time) l.t. October 13, 1998, because the allocation for the shore-based sector will be reached by that time. This action is authorized by regulations implementing the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which governs the groundfish fishery off Washington, Oregon, and California. This action is intended to keep the harvest of whiting at levels announced by NMFS on January 6, 1998.

DATES: Effective from 2 p.m. l.t. October 13, 1998, until the effective date of the 1999 annual specifications and management measures for the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery, which will be published in the **Federal Register**, unless modified, superseded, or rescinded. Comments will be accepted through November 2, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Submit comment to William Stelle, Jr., Administrator, Northwest Region (Regional Administrator),

National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115-0070; or William Hogarth, Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Katherine A. King at 206-526-6140 or Svein Fougner at 562-980-4040.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4) (62 FR 27519, May 20, 1997) established separate allocations for the catcher/processor, mothership, and shore-based (also called "shoreside") sectors of the whiting fishery. Each allocation is a harvest guideline, which, when reached, results in the end of the primary season for that sector. The catcher/processor sector is composed of catcher/processors, which are vessels that harvest and process whiting. The mothership sector is composed of motherships and catcher vessels that harvest whiting for delivery to motherships. Motherships are vessels that process, but do not harvest, whiting. The shoreside sector is composed of vessels that harvest whiting for delivery to shore-based processors. The allocations, which are based on the 1998 commercial harvest guideline for whiting of 207,000 metric tons (mt), are: 70,400 mt (34 percent) for the catcher/processor sector; 49,700 mt (24 percent) for the mothership sector; and 86,900 mt (42 percent) for the shoreside sector.

The best available information on October 8, 1998, indicated that 5,432.75 mt of whiting had been taken by the shore-based sector through October 7, 1998, and that the 86,900 mt shore-based allocation would be reached by 2 p.m. l.t. October 13, 1998. Accordingly, the primary season for the shore-based sector ends at 2 p.m. l.t. October 13, 1998, at which time no more than 10,000 lb (4,536 kg) of whiting may be

taken and retained, possessed, or landed by a catcher boat in the shore-based sector. The regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(3)(i) describe the primary season for the shore-based sector as the period(s) when the large-scale target fishery is conducted (when routine trip limits accommodating small fresh fish and bait fisheries and bycatch in other fisheries under § 660.323(b) are not needed nor in effect). The 10,000 lb (4,536-kg) trip limit, which also had been in effect before the primary season, is intended to accommodate small bait and fresh fish markets, and bycatch in other fisheries.

NMFS Action

For the reasons stated above, and in accordance with the regulations at 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4)(iii)(C), NMFS herein announces:

Effective 2 p.m. l.t. October 13, 1998—No more than 10,000 lb (4,536 kg) of whiting may be taken and retained, possessed, or landed by a catcher vessel participating in the shoreside sector.

Classification

This action is authorized by the regulations implementing the FMP. The determination to take this action is based on the most recent data available. The aggregate data upon which the determination is based are available for public inspection at the Office of the Regional Administrator (see **ADDRESSES**) during business hours. This action is taken under the authority of 50 CFR 660.323(a)(4)(iii)(C) and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: October 9, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 98-27816 Filed 10-13-98; 2:48 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F