



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., BLDG. 1
BIN C15700
Seattle, Washington 98115-0070

RECEIVED

AUG 06 2001

PFMC

AUG 2 2001

Mr. James Lone
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Jim:

I am writing to inform you that I have approved Amendment 14 to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). As you know, Amendment 14 creates a permit stacking program for limited entry, sablefish endorsement holders in the Pacific coast groundfish fishery and increases the duration of the fishery. NMFS expects that Amendment 14 will significantly increase safety in the fishery, allow individual fishery participants to more fully use their existing vessel capacity, and reduce overall capacity in the fixed gear fishery.

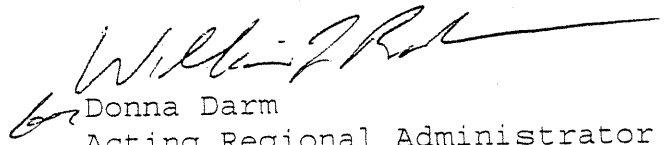
A proposed rule to implement Amendment 14 was published on June 8, 2001 (66 FR 30869), and we expect to have the final rule effective by August 1, 2001. The final rule announces the 2001 primary sablefish season, which begins on August 15, 2001, and ends on October 31, 2001. For 2002 and beyond, NMFS will propose further regulatory changes to implement Amendment 14. These additional changes include: scheduling the primary sablefish season for April 1 through October 31; persons, partnerships, and corporations owning sablefish endorsed limited entry permits would be required to document the ownership interests in those permits; only vessels that meet historic frozen sablefish landing requirements would be allowed to process sablefish at sea; persons who own sablefish endorsed limited entry permits who did not own sablefish endorsed permits on November 1, 2000, would be required to be on board their vessels while those vessels are participating in the primary sablefish fishery; vessels landing sablefish against their primary season cumulative limits would be required to report in to enforcement officers before making any sablefish landings; participants would be charged a fee to cover the management of this program.

Amendment 14 introduces a complex group of new management provisions to the limited entry, fixed gear sablefish fishery. In 2004-2005, NMFS plans to review the effects of Amendment 14 on

sablefish management and the sablefish fishery. In particular, the agency wishes to evaluate how Amendment 14 has affected vessel participation in the primary sablefish and other limited entry fixed gear fisheries, the effect of the owner-on-board requirement, and the effect of the provision that only individual humans may own permits.

NMFS appreciates the Council's efforts in improving vessel safety in this fishery. We also look forward to working with the Council on future capacity reduction programs.

Sincerely,


for Donna Darm
Acting Regional Administrator