¹⁶ "Slope rockfish" means Sebastes aurora (aurora), S. melanostomus (blackgill), S. paucispinis (bocaccio), S. goodei (chilipepper), S. crameri (darkblotch), S. elongatus (greenstriped), S. variegateu (harlequin), S. wilsoni (pygmy), S. proriger (redstripe), S. zacentrus (sharpchin), S. jordani (shortbelly), S. brevispinis (silvergrey), S. diploproa (splitnose), S. saxicola (stripetail), S. miniatus (vermilion), S. babcocki (redbanded), and S. reedi (yellowmouth).

¹⁷ "Pelagic shelf rockfish" includes Sebastes melanops (black), S. mystinus (blue), S. ciliatus (dusky), S. entomelas (widow), and S. flavidus (yellowtail).

¹⁸ "Demersal shelf rockfish" means Sebastes pinniger (canary), S. nebulosus (china), S. caurinus (copper), S. maliger (quillback), S. helvomaculatus (rosethorn), S. nigrocinctus (tiger), and S. ruberrimus (yelloweye).
 ¹⁹ "Other species" includes sculpins, sharks, skates, eulachon, smelts, capelin, squid, and octopus. The TAC for "other species" equals 5 per-

cent of the TAC amounts of target species.

2. Interim Halibut PSC Mortality Limits

Under §672.20(f), annual Pacific halibut PSC mortality limits are established for trawl and hook-and-line gear and may be established for pot gear. As in 1995, the Council proposes to exempt pot gear and the sablefish hookand-line fishery from halibut PSC limits for 1996. The interim PSC limits are effective on January 1, 1996, and remain in effect until superseded by the Final 1996 Harvest Specifications, which will be published in the Federal Register. The interim halibut PSC limits are as follows: (1) 500 mt to trawl gear, (2) 73 mt to hook-and-line gear for fisheries other than demersal shelf rockfish, and (3) 2.5 mt to hook-and-line gear for demersal shelf rockfish fishery in the Southeast Outside District.

Regulations at § 672.20(f)(1) authorize apportionments of the trawl halibut PSC limit allowance as bycatch allowances to a deep-water species complex, comprised of rex sole, sablefish, rockfish, deep-water flatfish, and arrowtooth flounder, and a shallowwater species complex, comprised of pollock, Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, flathead sole, Atka mackerel, and other species. The interim 1996 apportionment for the shallow-water species complex is 415 mt and for the deep-water species complex is 85 mt.

3. Closures to Directed Fishing

Under § 672.20(c)(2)(ii), if the Director, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Director), determines that the amount of a target species or "other species" category apportioned to a fishery or, with respect to Pacific cod, to an allocation to the inshore or offshore component, is likely to be reached, the Regional Director may establish a directed fishing allowance for that species or species group. In establishing a directed fishing allowance, the Regional Director shall consider the amount of that species group or allocation of Pacific cod to the inshore or offshore component that will be taken as incidental catch in directed fishing for other species in the same regulatory area or district. If the Regional Director establishes a directed fishing allowance, and that allowance is or will be reached before the end of the fishing year, NMFS will prohibit directed fishing for that species or

species group in the specified regulatory area or district.

The Regional Director has determined that interim amounts of groundfish specified in Table 1 of these interim specifications for species or species groups identified in Table 2 will be necessary as incidental catch to support anticipated groundfish fisheries prior to the time that final specifications for groundfish are in effect for the 1996 fishing year. Therefore, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for those target species, gears, and components listed in Table 2 to prevent exceeding the interim amounts of groundfish TAC amounts specified. These closures will be in effect during the period that the 1996 interim specifications for groundfish TAC amounts are effective beginning at 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 1996, until superseded by the Final 1996 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish. While the closures are in effect, the maximum retainable bycatch amounts at §672.20(g) apply at any time during a fishing trip. Additional closures and restrictions may be found in existing regulations at 50 CFR part 672.

TABLE 2.—CLOSURES TO DIRECTED FISHING UNDER THE INTERIM 1996 TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH AMOUNTS IMPLE-MENTED BY THIS ACTION¹ OFFSHORE = THE OFFSHORE COMPONENT; TRW = TRAWL; ALL = ALL GEARS; WG = WESTERN REGULATORY AREA; CG = CENTRAL REGULATORY AREA; EG = EASTERN REGULATORY AREA; GOA = ENTIRE GULF OF ALASKA

Fishery	Component	Gear	Closed areas
Atka mackerel		ALL	GOA
Northern rockfish Pelagic shelf rockfish		ALL	WG, EG WG, EG
Pelagic shelf rockfish Other rockfish		ALL	WG, EG WG, CG
Pacific cod	Offshore	ALL	EG
Rex sole		ALL	WG
Sablefish		TRW	WG, CG
Shortraker/rougheye		ALL	GOA
Thornyhead rockfish		ALL	GOA

¹ These closures to directed fishing are in addition to closures and prohibitions found in regulations at 50 CFR part 672.

After consideration of public comments on the proposed 1996 specifications and additional scientific information presented at its December 1995 meeting, the Council may recommend other closures to directed fishing. Additionally, NMFS may implement other closures at the time the Final 1996 Specifications for Groundfish are implemented, or during the 1996 fishing year as necessary for effective management.

Classification

This action is authorized under 50 CFR 611.92, 672.20, and 676.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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