Register for review and comment proposed initial harvest specifications for groundfish and associated management measures in the BSAI for the 1996 fishing year. The proposed initial specification document contains detailed information on the 1996 specification process and provides a discussion of the preliminary ABC amounts, proposed establishment of the 1996 annual TAC and initial TAC (ITAC) amounts for each target species and apportionments thereof among domestic annual processing (DAP), joint venture processing (JVP), total allowable level of foreign fishing (TALFF), apportionments of each TAC amount, as applicable, prohibited species catch (PSC) allowances under § 675.21(b), and seasonal allowances of pollock and Pacific cod TAC, as applicable.

Regulations at § 675.20(a)(7)(i) require that one-fourth of each proposed ITAC amount and apportionment thereof, one-fourth of each PSC allowance established under § 675.21(b), and the first seasonal allowances of pollock TAC and pollock CDQ become effective 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, on an interim basis and remain in effect until superseded by the final harvest specifications, which will be published in the Federal Register.

This action provides interim specifications and apportionments thereof for the 1996 fishing year that will become available on January 1, 1996, on an interim basis. Background information concerning the 1996 groundfish harvest specification process upon which this interim action is based is provided in the proposed initial specifications appearing in the Proposed Rules section of this Federal Register issue.

Species TAC amounts are apportioned initially among DAP, JVP, TALFF, and reserves under §§ 611.93(b)(2) and 675.20(a)(2). DAP amounts are intended for harvest by U.S. fishermen for delivery and sale to U.S. processors. JVP

amounts are intended for joint ventures in which U.S. fishermen deliver their catches to foreign processors at sea. TALFF amounts are intended for harvest by foreign fishermen. Existing harvesting and processing capacity allows the U.S. industry to utilize the entire 1996 TAC specified for BSAI groundfish. Therefore, the Council recommended that DAP equal TAC for each species category, which results in no proposed amounts of TALFF or JVP for the 1996 fishing year.

As required by $\S675.20(a)(3)$ and (a)(7)(i), each species' TAC amount initially is reduced by 15 percent, except the hook-and-line and pot gear allocations for sablefish. The sum of these 15-percent amounts is the reserve and may be reapportioned to a target species or the "other species" category during the year, providing that such reapportionments do not result in overfishing. One half of the pollock TAC placed in the reserve is designated as a CDQ reserve for use by CDQ participants. The ITAC amount for each species, except the hook-and-line and pot gear allocations for sablefish, is the remainder of the TAC amount after subtraction of the applicable reserve amount(s). One-fourth of the preliminary ITAC amount and apportionment thereof for each target species will be available on January 1, 1996. However, the first seasonal allowances of pollock TAC and pollock CDQ will be available on January 1, in lieu of the one-fourth interim allocation.

Amendment 18 to the FMP and Amendment 23 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) established inshore and offshore component allocations of pollock in the BSAI and inshore and offshore component allocations of pollock and Pacific cod in the GOA during the years 1993 through 1995. Because Amendments 18 and 23 and their implementing regulations

expire on December 31, 1995, and because the Council has yet to complete development of its comprehensive plan to address problems caused by the open access nature of the Alaska groundfish fisheries, the Council voted unanimously at its June 1995 meeting to adopt Amendments 38 and 40, which would extend the provisions of the expiring amendments through December 31, 1998. On September 18, 1995, NMFS published a notice of proposed rulemaking in the Federal Register to continue the apportionments between the inshore and offshore components through 1998 (60 FR 48087). On November 28, 1995, NMFS determined that Amendment 38 and Amendment 40 are consistent with the national standards, other provisions of the Magnuson Act, and other applicable laws. A final rule is to be issued shortly. Consequently, these interim specifications specify allocations of pollock to inshore and offshore components.

1. Interim 1996 BSAI Groundfish Fishery Specifications

Table 1 provides interim TAC amounts and apportionments thereof, interim TAC allocations of pollock to the inshore and offshore components, first seasonal allowances of pollock TAC and pollock CDQ, an interim sablefish apportionment to trawl gear, and Pacific cod TAC apportionment to gear types. These interim specifications become effective at 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 1996.

Existing regulations at § 675.20(a)(7)(i) do not provide for an interim specification for the sablefish CDQ reserve or for sablefish managed under the Individual Fishing Quota management plan. As a result, fishing for CDQ sablefish and sablefish harvested with fixed gear is prohibited until the effective date of the final 1996 BSAI groundfish specifications.

TABLE 1.—INTERIM 1996 TAC AMOUNTS OF GROUNDFISH FOR THE BERING SEA AND ALEUTIAN ISLANDS MANAGEMENT AREA (BSAI), BERING SEA (BS), AND ALEUTIAN ISLANDS (AI). 1,2 First Seasonal Allowances of Pollock Allocations to the Inshore and Offshore Components. First Seasonal Allowances of Pollock Allocations to the Community Development Quota (CDQ) Program. Allowances of Sablefish to Trawl (TRW) Gear. Allowances of Pacific Cod to Jig Gear, H/L or Pot, or TRW

[Amounts are in metric tons]

| Species/component | Area and/or gear type | Interim TAC and CDQ |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Pollock: 3.4,5 | | |
| Inshore | BS | 167,344 |
| Offshore | BS | 310,781 |
| Inshore | AI | 16,839 |
| Offshore | AI | 31,272 |
| Inshore | BogDist | 298 |
| Offshore | BogDist | 553 |