UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MO 20910

NMFS Announces Final Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (BFT) Quotas and Atlantic Tuna Fisheries Management Measures

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces a final rule that:

(1) Implements and allocates the U.S. BFT quota recommended by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for 2011 and 2012;
(2) Adjusts the 2011 U.S. BFT quota and subquotas to account for unharvested 2010 quota, and to account for a portion of the estimated 2011 dead discards up front (see attached table);
(3) Reinstates pelagic longline target catch requirements for retaining BFT in the Northeast Distant Gear Restricted Area (NED);
(4) Amends the Atlantic tunas possession-at-sea and landing regulations to allow removal of tail lobes; and
(5) Clarifies the transfer-at-sea regulations for Atlantic tunas.

This final rule is necessary to implement ICCAT recommendations, as required by the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act, and to achieve domestic management objectives under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (Consolidated HMS FMP).

In the proposed rule (76 FR 18653, March 14, 2011), NMFS proposed to subtract the entire dead discard estimate of 160 mt (the 2009 estimate) from the U.S. baseline quota of 923.7 mt; add the full amount of allowed underharvest from 2010, i.e., 10 percent of the 2010 U.S. quota (94.9 mt); and then apply the allocation scheme established in the Consolidated HMS FMP to the adjusted total (858.6 mt).

Following consideration of public comment and the availability of updated (2010) dead discard estimates, NMFS has decided to:

- Account for half of the dead discard estimate up front in the 2011 specifications process;
- Allocate the full 2011 baseline quotas to all directed categories;
- Allocate 61.1 mt to the Longline Category. This amount is achieved by deducting from the Longline category half of the updated dead discard estimate of 122.3 mt and applying to the Longline category half of the underharvest allowed to be carried forward to 2011, i.e., 74.8 mt baseline quota - 61.2 mt dead discards + 47.5 mt underharvest = 61.1 mt adjusted quota (not including the 25-mt allocation for the NED);
- Hold the remainder of the 2010 underharvest that can be carried forward (47.4 mt) in the Reserve category, for an adjusted 2011 Reserve category quota of 70.5 mt, which will be held in the Reserve category until later in the fishing year for maximum flexibility in accounting for 2011 total landings and dead discards.

Although the United States is not required by ICCAT to account for dead discards until the end of the fishing season, NMFS is taking the proactive measure of accounting for half of the estimated pelagic longline dead discards, up front, and within the Longline category quota.

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NMFS considers this a transitional approach from the method used over the past four fishing years, in which the full estimate of dead discards was deducted at the beginning of the year when the quota specifications were established.

Given the anticipated quota needs of the Longline category for the 2011 fishing year (i.e., accounting for both landings and discards), this final rule is intended to provide sufficient quota to the Longline category to cover the anticipated landings and dead discards (using the 2010 estimate as a proxy). Accounting for dead discards in the Longline category in this way may provide some incentive for pelagic longline fishermen to reduce those interactions that may result in dead discards. Furthermore, NMFS anticipates that dead discards in the pelagic longline fishery may be reduced due to implementation of the weak hook requirement in the Gulf of Mexico.

The final rule also reinstates target catch requirements for pelagic longline vessels fishing in the Northeast Distant Gear Restricted Area, amends the Atlantic tunas possession-at-sea and landing regulations to allow removal of tail lobes, and clarifies the transfer-at-sea regulations for Atlantic tunas.

In light of the issues involving U.S. quotas and domestic allocations, pelagic longline dead discards, the need to account for dead discards that result from fishing with other gears, and bycatch reduction objectives, as well as public comment, NMFS intends to undertake a comprehensive review of BFT management in the near future to determine whether existing management measures need to be adjusted to meet the multiple goals for the BFT fishery.

See the attached table for the final 2011 BFT quotas and quota specifications. To view the final rule and supporting documents, see www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/breaking_news.htm.

This notice is a courtesy to BFT fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact the HMS Management Division at (978) 281-9260.

for Emily H. Menashes
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

JUN 30 2011
Date

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Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas and quota specifications (in metric tons) for the 2011 fishing year (January 1-December 31, 2011)

		2011 Quota Specifications		
Category (% share of baseline quota)	Baseline Allocation for 2011 and 2012 (per 2010 ICCAT Recommendation and Consolidated HMS FMP allocations)	Dead Discard Deduction (1/2 of 2010 proxy of 122.3 mt)	2010 Underharvest to Carry Forward to 2011 (94.9 mt total)	Adjusted 2011 Fishing Year Quota
Total (100)	923.7			957.4
Angling (19.7)	182.0 SUBQUOTAS: School 94.9 Reserve 17.6 North 36.5 South 40.8 LS/SM 82.9 North 39.1 South 43.8 Trophy 4.2 North 1.4 South 2.8			182.0 SUBQUOTAS: School 94.9 Reserve 17.6 North 36.5 South 40.8 LS/SM 82.9 North 39.1 South 43.8 Trophy 4.2 North 1.4 South 2.8
General (47.1)	435.1 SUBQUOTAS: Jan 23.1 Jun-Aug 217.6 Sept 115.3 Oct-Nov 56.6 Dec 22.6			435.1 SUBQUOTAS: Jan 23.1 Jun-Aug 217.6 Sept 115.3 Oct-Nov 56.6 Dec 22.6
Harpoon (3.9)	36.0			36.0
Purse Seine (18.6)	171.8			171.8
Longline (8.1)	74.8 SUBQUOTAS: North (-NED) 29.9 NED 25.0* South 44.9	-61.2	+47.5	61.1 SUBQUOTAS: North (-NED) 24.4 NED 25.0* South 36.7
Trap (0.1)	0.9			0.9
Reserve (2.5)	23.1		+47.4	70.5

*25-mt ICCAT set-aside to account for bycatch of BFT in pelagic longline fisheries in the NED. Not included in totals at top of table.