



NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna General Category Fishery: NMFS Adjusts Daily Retention Limit for June-August 2016 to Five Fish

May 11, 2016

Action being taken and important dates

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is adjusting the Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) General category daily retention limit from the default limit of one to **five** large medium or giant BFT (measuring 73" or greater) per vessel per day/trip for June 1 through August 31, 2016.

In deciding the retention limit, NMFS considered the regulatory determination criteria regarding inseason adjustments, which include considerations about the amount of available quota, effects of the action on the continuation of the fishery, availability of BFT on the fishing grounds, the value of information obtained from the fishery, and the effects of the adjustment on the stock and on accomplishing the objectives of the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan and amendments. This action should provide opportunities to harvest the available U.S. BFT quota without exceeding it; prevent overharvest of the 2016 General category quota; and collect a broad range of data for stock monitoring purposes.

Who is affected?

The daily retention limit adjustment applies to vessels permitted in the **commercial** Atlantic tunas General category and the HMS Charter/Headboat category while fishing commercially. It is effective for all areas except for the Gulf of Mexico, which is designated as BFT spawning grounds and where NMFS does not allow targeted fishing for BFT. Regardless of the duration of a fishing trip, no more than a single day's retention limit may be possessed, retained, or landed. For example (and specific to the June through August 2016 limit), whether a vessel fishing under the General category limit takes a two-day trip or makes two trips in one day, the daily limit of *five* fish may not be exceeded upon landing.

NMFS will continue to monitor the BFT fisheries closely. Dealers are required to submit landing reports within 24 hours of a dealer receiving BFT. **General category, HMS Charter/Headboat, Harpoon, and Angling category vessel owners are required to report the catch of all BFT retained or discarded dead, within 24 hours of the landing(s) or end of each trip, by accessing hmspermits.noaa.gov.** Depending on fishing effort and catch rates, additional retention limit adjustments or fishery closures may be necessary to ensure available quota is not exceeded or to enhance scientific data collection from, and fishing opportunities in, all geographic areas.

NMFS regulations at 50 CFR 635.21(a)(1) require that all BFT that are released be handled in a manner that will maximize survivability, and without removing the fish from the water. For additional information on safe handling, see the "Careful Catch and Release" brochure available at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/.

This notice is a courtesy to BFT fishery permit holders to help keep you informed about the fishery. For additional information, call (978) 281-9260, or go to hmspermits.noaa.gov. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register.

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