



NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

NMFS Closes the 2016 Atlantic Bluefin Tuna General Category Fishery, Coastwide, on November 4, 2016

November 1, 2016

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closes the General category fishery, coastwide, for large medium and giant Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) effective 11:30 p.m. local time, Friday, November 4, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

The base quota for the General category is 466.7 mt. To date this year, NMFS has adjusted the General category base quota for 2016 twice, including a transfer of 125 mt from the Reserve category effective October 6, and a transfer of 85 mt (18 mt from the Harpoon category quota and 67 mt from the Reserve category) effective October 14, resulting in an adjusted quota of 676.7 mt. Based on the best available BFT landings information for the General category BFT fishery, NMFS has determined that the adjusted General category quota of 676.7 mt has been reached, (i.e., as of October 31, reported landings total approximately 677.4 mt). Therefore, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant BFT by persons aboard vessels permitted in the Atlantic tunas General and HMS Charter/Headboat categories (while fishing commercially) must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time on November 4, 2016. The General category will reopen automatically on January 1, 2017, for the January through March 2017 subperiod. The intent of this closure is to prevent any further overharvest of the available 2016 General category quota.

Who is affected?

This action applies to Atlantic tunas General category (commercial) permitted vessels and Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Charter/Headboat category permitted vessels when fishing commercially for BFT. Fishermen may catch and release or tag and release BFT of all sizes, subject to the requirements of HMS catch-and-release and tag-and-release programs. NMFS regulations require that all BFT that are released be handled in a manner that will maximize their survival, 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 more information on BFT fishing regulations, including recreational size and retention limits, please go to hmspermits.noaa.gov or call (978) 281-9260. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register.

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