



NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna General Category Fishery: NMFS Transfers 125 mt from the Reserve Category and Adjusts the Daily Retention Limit to Four Fish for the Remainder of 2016

October 6, 2016

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) transfers 125 metric tons (mt) of Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) quota from the Reserve category to the General category and adjusts the General category BFT daily retention limit for the remainder of 2016 from five to four large medium or giant BFT (measuring 73" or greater) per vessel per day/trip. NMFS takes this action after considering 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, effects of the adjustments on the stock, and consistency with the objectives of the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments. Per the regulations regarding adjustment of General category BFT daily retention limits, **the adjustment from five to four large medium or giant BFT per vessel per day/trip will be effective Sunday, October 9, 2016.**

The transfer of 125 mt of Reserve category quota to the General category for the remainder of 2016 results in adjusted General and Reserve category quotas for 2016 of 591.7 mt and 75.6 mt, respectively. NMFS will close the 2016 General category fishery when the adjusted General category quota of 591.7 mt has been reached, unless future adjustments are warranted, or it will close automatically on December 31, 2016.

These adjustments should provide a reasonable opportunity to harvest the U.S. quota of BFT without exceeding it, preserve the opportunity for General category fishermen to participate in the winter BFT fishery, allow collection of a broad range of data for stock monitoring purposes, and will be consistent with the objectives of the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments.

For more information on BFT fishing regulations, including recreational size and retention limits, please go to hmspermits.noaa.gov.

Who is affected?

This action applies to vessels permitted in the **commercial** Atlantic tunas General category and the HMS Charter/Headboat category while fishing commercially. The daily retention limit 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, the daily retention limit applies upon landing. For example (and specific to the limit that will apply through the end of the year), whether a vessel fishing under the General category limit takes a two-day trip or makes two trips in one day, the day/trip limit of four fish applies and 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 the level of fishing effort and catch rates, NMFS may determine that additional action (i.e., quota and/or daily retention limit adjustment, or closure) is 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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