



## NOAA FISHERIES

### Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

# Atlantic Bluefin Tuna General Category Fishery: NMFS Transfers 18 mt from the Harpoon Category and 67 mt from the Reserve Category and Adjusts the Daily Retention Limit to Two Fish for the Remainder of 2016

October 14, 2016

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) transfers 85 metric tons (mt) of Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) quota to the General category (18 mt from the Harpoon category and 67 mt from the Reserve category) and adjusts the General category BFT daily retention limit for the remainder of 2016 from four to two 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 four to two large medium or giant BFT per vessel per day/trip will be effective Monday, October 17, 2016.**

As of October 11, 2016, the General category has landed approximately 537 mt of its adjusted 2016 quota of 591.7 mt. Without a quota transfer, NMFS would have to close the 2016 General category fishery for the remainder of the year, while unused quota remains in the Harpoon and Reserve categories. The quota transfers result in adjusted 2016 quotas of 676.7 mt, 20.6 mt, and 8.6 mt for the General, Harpoon, and Reserve category quotas, respectively. NMFS will close the 2016 General category fishery for the remainder of the year when the adjusted General category quota of 676.7 mt has been reached.

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 fall/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](http://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 two 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](http://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/](http://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](http://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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