

(b) A Letter of Authorization with a period of validity less than the period of validity of this subpart may be renewed subject to renewal conditions in § 216.157.

(c) A Letter of Authorization will set forth:

(1) Permissible methods of incidental taking;

(2) Specified geographic area for taking;

(3) Means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on the species of marine mammals authorized for taking and its habitat; and

(4) Requirements for monitoring and reporting incidental takes.

(d) Issuance of a Letter of Authorization will be based on a determination that the number of marine mammals taken by the activity will be small, and that the level of taking will be consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under these regulations.

(e) Notice of issuance or denial of a Letter of Authorization will be published in the **Federal Register** within 30 days of a determination.

§ 216.157 Renewal of a Letter of Authorization.

(a) A Letter of Authorization issued under § 216.106 and § 216.156 for the activity specified in § 216.151 will be renewed annually upon:

(1) Notification to the National Marine Fisheries Service that the activity described in the application for a Letter of Authorization submitted under § 216.156 will be undertaken and that there will not be a substantial modification to the described work, mitigation, or monitoring undertaken during the upcoming season;

(2) Timely receipt of the monitoring reports required under § 216.155, and acceptance by the National Marine Fisheries Service;

(3) A determination by the National Marine Fisheries Service that the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures required under §§ 216.153 and 216.155 and the Letter of Authorization were undertaken and will be undertaken during the upcoming period of validity of a renewed Letter of Authorization; and

(4) A determination that the number of marine mammals taken by the activity continues to be small and that the level of taking will be consistent with the findings made for the total taking allowable under these regulations.

(b) A notice of issuance or denial of a renewal of a Letter of Authorization will be published in the **Federal Register** within 30 days of a determination.

§ 216.158 Modifications to the Letter of Authorization.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, no substantive modification, including withdrawal or suspension, to the Letter of Authorization issued pursuant to § 216.106 and subject to the provisions of this subpart shall be made until after notice and an opportunity for public comment.

(b) If the Assistant Administrator determines that an emergency exists that poses a significant risk to the well-being of the species or stocks of marine mammals specified in § 216.151(b), the Letter of Authorization issued pursuant to § 216.106 may be substantively modified without prior notice and an opportunity for public comment. Notification will be published in the **Federal Register** subsequent to the action.

[FR Doc. 03-22185 Filed 8-29-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 635

[I.D. 082203D]

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fisheries; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Atlantic bluefin tuna retention limit adjustment.

SUMMARY: This action adjusts the Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) General category daily retention limit to allow for maximum utilization of the General category adjusted September time-period subquota. NMFS increases the daily retention limit to two large medium or giant BFT through September 30, 2003. This action is being taken to provide increased fishing opportunities in all areas without risking overharvest of the General category quota.

DATES: Effective September 1, 2003 through September 30, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brad McHale, 978-281-9260.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations implemented under the authority of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*) and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

(Magnuson-Stevens Act; 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) governing the harvest of BFT by persons and vessels subject to U.S. jurisdiction are found at 50 CFR part 635. Section 635.27 subdivides the U.S. BFT quota recommended by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) among the various domestic fishing categories, and General category effort controls (including time-period subquotas and restricted fishing days (RFDs)) are specified annually under 50 CFR 635.23(a) and 635.27(a). The 2003 BFT Quota Specifications and General category effort controls were proposed on July 10, 2003 (68 FR 41103).

Adjustment of Daily Retention Limit

Under § 635.23 (a)(4), NMFS may increase or decrease the General category daily retention limit of large medium and giant BFT over a range from zero (on RFDs) to a maximum of three per vessel to allow for maximum utilization of the quota for BFT. Based on a review of dealer reports, daily landing trends, available quota, and the availability of BFT on the fishing grounds, NMFS has determined that an increase of the daily retention limit for the September time-period is appropriate and necessary to maximize use of the full, adjusted September subquota. Based on current and historical General category landings rates in the June through August time-period, it is highly unlikely that the June through August subquota will be filled in the remaining fishing days. At current catch rates and a daily retention limit of one BFT per vessel, it is also unlikely that the adjusted September subquota will be attained in the September time-period. Therefore, NMFS adjusts the General category daily retention limit through September 30 to two large medium or giant BFT per vessel.

The intent of this adjustment is to allow for maximum utilization by General category participants of the subquota for the September time-period (specified under 50 CFR 635.27(a)), (which has been adjusted by the quota carryover from the June through August time-period subquota), to help achieve optimum yield in the General category fishery, to collect a broad range of data for stock monitoring purposes, and to be consistent with the objectives of the HMS FMP.

Closures or subsequent adjustments to the daily retention limit, if any, will be published in the **Federal Register**. In addition, owners/operators may call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (888) 872-8862 or (978) 281-9305 for updates

on quota monitoring and retention limit adjustments.

Classification

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds that it is impracticable and contrary to the public interest to provide prior notice of, and an opportunity for public comment on, this action. Catch rates for the 2003 BFT season have been extremely low and, at the current rate of landings, it is highly unlikely that the available quota will be harvested by September 30, 2003. Delaying this action would further exacerbate this problem. Large amounts of unharvested quota will have negative social and economic impacts to U.S. fishermen that depend upon catching the available quota within the time periods designated in the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks. Therefore, the AA finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment. For all of the above reasons, and because this action relieves a restriction (i.e., allows the retention of more fish), there is also good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the delay in effectiveness of this action.

This action is being taken under 50 CFR 635.23(a)(4) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: August 26, 2003.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 03-22339 Filed 8-27-03; 2:54 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 021122284-2323-02; I.D. 082503B]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Commercial Quota Harvested for Massachusetts

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notification of a closure of a commercial fishery.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the summer flounder commercial quota available to Massachusetts has been

harvested. Vessels issued a commercial Federal fisheries permit for the summer flounder fishery may not land summer flounder in Massachusetts for the remainder of calendar year 2003, unless additional quota becomes available through a transfer. Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery require publication of this notification to advise Massachusetts that the quota has been harvested and to advise vessel permit holders and dealer permit holders that no commercial quota is available for landing summer flounder in Massachusetts.

DATES: Effective 0001 hours, September 2, 2003, through 2400 hours, December 31, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jason Blackburn, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9326, e-mail jason.blackburn@noaa.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery are found at 50 CFR part 648. The regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned on a percentage basis among the coastal states from North Carolina through Maine. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state is described in § 648.100.

The initial total commercial quota for summer flounder for the 2003 calendar year was set equal to 13,980,028 lb (6,341,235 kg) (68 FR 60, January 2, 2003). The percent allocated to vessels landing summer flounder in Massachusetts is 6.82046 percent, resulting in an initial commercial quota of 953,502 lb (432,501 kg). The 2003 allocation was adjusted downward due to an overage of the 2002 quota of 42,498 lb (19,277 kg) as of October 31, 2002. The resulting adjusted 2003 commercial quota for Massachusetts is 911,004 lb (413,229 kg). The 2003 allocation was further reduced to 907,274 lb (411,537 kg) due to research set-aside.

Section 648.101(b) requires the Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) to monitor state commercial quotas and to determine when a state's commercial quota has been harvested. NMFS then publishes a notification in the **Federal Register** to advise the state and to notify Federal vessel and dealer permit holders that, effective upon a specific date, the state's commercial quota has been harvested and no commercial quota is available for landing summer flounder in that state. The Regional Administrator has determined, based upon dealer reports and other available

information, that Massachusetts has harvested its quota for 2003.

The regulations at § 648.4(b) provide that Federal permit holders agree, as a condition of the permit, not to land summer flounder in any state that the Regional Administrator has determined no longer has commercial quota available. Therefore, effective 0001 hours, September 2, 2003, further landings of summer flounder in Massachusetts by vessels holding summer flounder commercial Federal fisheries permits are prohibited for the remainder of the 2003 calendar year, unless additional quota becomes available through a transfer and is announced in the **Federal Register**. Effective 0001 hours, September 2, 2003, federally permitted dealers are also notified that they may not purchase summer flounder from federally permitted vessels that land in Massachusetts for the remainder of the calendar year, or until additional quota becomes available through a transfer.

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: August 27, 2003.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 03-22337 Filed 8-27-03; 2:53 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-S

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 021122286-3036-02; I.D. 082603A]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the Gulf of Alaska

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the C season allowance of the pollock total allowable catch (TAC) for Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), August 27, 2003, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., September 15, 2003.