

The FSS Contracting Officer may request additional information from the Contractor.

(f) *Contracting Officer responsibilities.* The FSS Contracting Officer will—

(1) Review the EPA request to ensure conformance with the EPA method,

(2) Make a determination. The FSS Contracting Officer may use any information (e.g., market research) deemed necessary to support their determination. The FSS Contracting Officer may determine to—

(i) Accept the EPA request either in whole or in part,

(ii) Reject the EPA request either in whole or in part, or

(iii) Take any other action deemed to be in the best interest of the Government (e.g., negotiate a more favorable EPA).

(3) Notify the Contractor of their determination, and

(4) Modify the contract, as applicable, to reflect the determination. Contract items that need to be removed from the contract as a result of rejection or an inability to reach agreement are to be removed in accordance with 552.238–79, Cancellation.

(g) *Effective date.* EPA requests approved by the FSS Contracting Officer under this clause shall apply to orders issued on or after the effective date of the contract modification. Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs) may be modified by the ordering agency in accordance with the terms and conditions of the BPA.

(h) *Update of contract pricing and catalog data.* The Contractor shall update its FSS pricing and any other FSS catalog data in accordance with the terms and conditions of this contract.

(End of clause)

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 300

RIN 0648–BK85

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; Seafood Import Monitoring Program

AGENCY: International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Proposed rule; withdrawal.

SUMMARY: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) withdraws the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) proposed rule, which was published in the **Federal Register** on December 28, 2022. The SIMP proposed rule intended to add species to SIMP pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. In addition, the proposed rule

would have amended SIMP regulations to clarify the responsibilities and definitions, and make other necessary administrative modernizations. In light of the extensive public comments received regarding the December 2022 proposed rule, NMFS has decided to conduct a comprehensive program review in order to strengthen the impact and effectiveness of SIMP. Critical aspects of that review will include better defining the problem that we are working to address and establishing clear, achievable goals through constructive engagement with our stakeholders. Comments received on the December 2022 proposed rule will also be taken into consideration as part of the review. While NMFS conducts this comprehensive review, SIMP will continue to operate in its current form, all existing requirements remain in force, and the list of priority species currently subject to SIMP requirements remains unchanged. In addition, NMFS will continue to support industry and other stakeholders in SIMP compliance during the review.

DATES: The proposed rule published on December 28, 2022 (87 FR 79836) is withdrawn on November 16, 2023.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Rachael Confair, Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce, NMFS, 301–427–8361, rachael.confair@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On December 28, 2022, NMFS issued its SIMP proposed rule (85 FR 58321). The proposed rule was initially open for 90 days of public comment, and this period was extended for an additional 30 days. It included a proposal to incorporate additional priority species in SIMP, as well as to make other administrative changes.

SIMP has been in effect for more than 1,100 unique species, representing 13 species groups, for approximately 4 years. SIMP was established as a screening tool to identify and deter products derived from Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, as well as misrepresented seafood from entering the U.S. market. The information required under SIMP can lead to the interdiction of IUU fish and fish products as they enter the United States, but it was not designed to achieve that outcome, nor has that been typically how it functions. It is primarily a permitting, reporting and recordkeeping program that conducts post-entry audits, and in some cases, enforcement inspections and, when

potentially illegal imports are identified, follow-up investigations.

Program Review

It is clear, based on the comments received, combined with feedback received over the past few years, that this is the right time to review SIMP. There are a diverse array of viewpoints, and sometimes unrealistic expectations, on what SIMP should or could be doing. In order to strengthen our impact and effectiveness, it is important to better define our goals, and then identify clear mechanisms to achieve them.

As an integral part of this undertaking, NMFS will actively seek engagement and input from all relevant stakeholder groups, including industry, non-governmental organizations, other Federal agencies, congressional representatives, and foreign governments. NMFS intends to bring together an informal interagency working group to review our approach and identify possible strategies for increasing the effectiveness and impact of SIMP on countering IUU fishing and seafood fraud. This collaborative effort will also explore alternative or complementary approaches available to address seafood traceability for NMFS and its interagency partners. Some questions that NMFS will consider during the review are:

1. *Determine the goals:* What is the problem or problems that SIMP was designed to address? Are there changes that should be made to the goals? What do we want to achieve and what is the best way to do it?

2. *Determine whether the goals are achievable:* Are the goals feasible? What does success look like? Are there limitations of resources, technology, or other elements that must be considered in determining whether the goals are achievable?

3. *Determine what is needed to achieve the goals:* Are there additional authorities needed for NOAA or other agencies to achieve these goals? What new tools are needed to accomplish this goal? Are there existing tools that could be used more effectively? How can we use a whole-of-government approach to achieve these goals?

NMFS will review and consider all aspects of the Program, including the initial constraints that shaped SIMP's original framework. NMFS will use both the public comments received and internal and external program assessments to refine the areas of focus. NMFS also plans to conduct public listening sessions to solicit written and oral feedback from public stakeholders, as well as participating in other

engagement opportunities with stakeholders or groups of stakeholders.

The withdrawal of this proposed rule does not preclude NMFS from reinitiating rulemaking concerning the issues addressed in the proposed rule. Should that occur, NMFS will re-propose the action and provide new opportunities for comment. More information on SIMP and the NMFS review are available online at the Agency's website (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/noaa-fisheries-withdrawal-its-simp-proposed-rule-and-announcement-comprehensive-review>).

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

Dated: November 13, 2023.

Alexa Cole,

Director; Office of International Affairs, Trade, and Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2023-25309 Filed 11-14-23; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 231106-0262; RTID 0648-XD357]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; 2024 and Projected 2025 Bluefish Specifications

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

ACTION: Proposed rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes Atlantic bluefish specifications for the 2024 fishing year and projects specifications for fishing year 2025, as recommended by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. This action is necessary to establish allowable harvest levels for the stock to prevent overfishing and promote rebuilding, using the best scientific information available. This rule also informs the public of the proposed fishery specifications and provides an opportunity for comment on the proposed action.

DATES: Comments must be received by December 1, 2023.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2023-0126, by the following method:

Electronic Submission: Submit all federal public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.

1. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov>, and enter "NOAA-NMFS-2023-0126" in the Search box;

2. Click the "Comment" icon, complete the required fields; and

3. Enter or attach your comments.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on <https://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, *etc.*), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). If you are unable to submit your comment through <https://www.regulations.gov>, contact Cynthia Ferrio, Fishery Policy Analyst, Cynthia.Ferrio@noaa.gov.

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) for this action that describes the proposed measures and other considered alternatives. The EA also provides an economic analysis, as well as an analysis of the biological, economic, and social impacts of the proposed measures and other considered alternatives. Copies of the specifications document, including the EA, are available on request from Dr. Christopher M. Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Suite 201, 800 North State Street, Dover, DE 19901. These documents are also accessible via the internet at <https://www.mafmc.org/supporting-documents>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cynthia Ferrio, Fishery Policy Analyst, (978) 281-9180.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission jointly manage the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The FMP requires the specification of annual regulatory limits for up to 3 years at a time, including: an acceptable biological catch (ABC), commercial and recreational annual catch limits (ACL), commercial and recreational annual catch targets (ACT), a commercial quota, a recreational harvest limit (RHL), and

other management measures. This action proposes bluefish specifications for the 2024 fishing year, and projects specifications for 2025, based on Council and Commission recommendations.

Recent research track and management track assessments for bluefish (December 2022 and June 2023, respectively) determined that the stock is no longer overfished and overfishing is not occurring. However, the spawning stock biomass has not yet reached its target, so the fishery remains under its rebuilding plan. These proposed specifications would decrease the 2024 acceptable biological catch by 43 percent from 2023, based on recommendations from the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), results from these assessments, and the rebuilding plan for the stock.

The Council's Bluefish Monitoring Committee recommended that no uncertainty buffers be applied to either the commercial or recreational sector in 2024 or 2025, but did recommend that commercial discards be accounted for in the specifications process beginning in fishing year 2024. In prior years, commercial discards have been considered negligible, but with updated assessment information, it is recommended that discards from both sectors be included. Although the stock is no longer overfished and therefore transferring quota between recreational and commercial sectors is no longer prohibited by governing regulations, no sector quota transfer is recommended because the fishery is still under a rebuilding plan. The resulting 2024 specifications would decrease the commercial quota by 43 percent, and the RHL by 15 percent from 2023. At their joint meeting in August 2023, the Council and the Commission's Bluefish Board reviewed and approved these specifications as recommended by the SSC and Monitoring Committee. No changes were recommended to recreational management measures (*i.e.*, bag limits), as the average recreational harvest since 2021 (11.54 million pounds (lb); 5,234 metric tons (mt)) remains below the proposed RHL for 2024 (11.96 million lb; 5,425 mt). Status quo recreational measures are also intended to promote continued stability and consistency in the fishery while minimizing the risk of an overage in the recreational sector.

Although catch limits are decreasing, neither sector of the fishery is expected to be substantially impacted by this action. Harvest in both sectors has been decreasing in recent years; coastwide commercial landings have not exceeded 2.2 million lb (998 mt) in the last 3