

revised recreational ACL. Accordingly, the harvest and possession of South Atlantic gag for the recreational sector is closed effective at 12:01 a.m. eastern time on October 23, 2023, through December 31, 2023. During the recreational closure, the bag and possession limits for gag in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.

Additionally, the revised recreational AM at 50 CFR 622.193(c)(2)(ii) as implemented through the final rule to implement Amendment 53 to the FMP (88 FR 65135, September 21, 2023), specifies that if the recreational ACL is exceeded, then NMFS will reduce the recreational fishing season in the following fishing year to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded, and NMFS will use the best scientific information available to determine if reducing the length of the recreational season is necessary. Therefore, once the 2023 recreational landings information has been finalized, NMFS will evaluate if it is necessary for the 2024 recreational fishing season to be reduced based on 2023 landings. If a fishing season reduction is necessary, NMFS will publish a notice for any 2024 recreational fishing season reduction or associated recreational fishing season closure in the **Federal Register**.

January Through April Gag Seasonal Closure

Additionally, a seasonal closure is in place for the commercial and recreational sectors for gag and associated grouper species from January through April each fishing year as specified in 50 CFR 622.183(b)(1). During this seasonal closure for the recreational and commercial sectors for gag from January through April each fishing year, no person may fish for, harvest, or possess any gag in or from the South Atlantic EEZ. Therefore, the commercial and recreational harvest of gag will not commence until May 1, 2024.

Classification

NMFS issues these actions pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. These actions are required by 50 CFR 622.193(c)(1)(i) and the revised measures at 50 CFR 622.193(c)(2)(i) as implemented through the final rule to implement Amendment 53 to the FMP (88 FR 65135, September 21, 2023), which were issued pursuant to section 304(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and are exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on

these actions, as notice and comment are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the regulations associated with the closures of the gag commercial sector and the gag recreational sector have already been subject to notice and public comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the sector closures. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment are contrary to the public interest because there is a need to implement these actions as soon as possible to protect gag, because the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial and recreational ACLs. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially result in continued harvest in excess of the established commercial and recreational ACLs. Given the large reductions in the commercial and recreational harvest levels resulting from the implementation of Amendment 53, NMFS wants to provide as much notice of these sector closures as possible to allow fishers time to prepare for changes to their fishing seasons.

For the reasons stated earlier, the Assistant Administrator also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

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

Dated: September 28, 2023.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 221215-0272; RTID 0648-XD447]

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; Quota Transfers From VA and DE to NC

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

ACTION: Notification of quota transfers.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of Delaware are transferring a portion of their 2023 commercial

bluefish quota to the State of North Carolina. These adjustments to the 2023 fishing year quotas are necessary to comply with the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provisions. This announcement informs the public of the revised 2023 commercial bluefish quotas for Virginia, Delaware, and North Carolina.

DATES: Effective September 29, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Laura Deighan, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9184.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing the Atlantic bluefish fishery are found in 50 CFR 648.160 through 648.167. These regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the Coastal States from Maine through Florida. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each State is described in § 648.162, and the final 2023 allocations were published on December 21, 2022 (87 FR 78011).

The final rule implementing Amendment 1 to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), as published in the **Federal Register** on July 26, 2000 (65 FR 45844), provided a mechanism for transferring bluefish commercial quota from one State to another. Two or more States, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator, can request approval to transfer or combine bluefish commercial quota under § 648.162(e)(1)(i) through (iii). The Regional Administrator must approve any such transfer based on the criteria in § 648.162(e). In evaluating requests to transfer a quota or combine quotas, the Regional Administrator shall consider whether: the transfer or combinations would preclude the overall annual quota from being fully harvested; the transfer addresses an unforeseen variation or contingency in the fishery; and the transfer is consistent with the objectives of the FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Regional Administrator has determined these three criteria have been met for the transfers approved in this notification.

Virginia is transferring 50,000 pounds (lb) (22,680 kilograms (kg)) and Delaware is transferring 40,000 lb (18,144 kg) to North Carolina, through mutual agreements of the States. These transfers were requested to ensure that North Carolina would not exceed its 2023 State quota. The revised bluefish quotas for 2023 are: Virginia, 305,625 lb (138,629 kg); Delaware, 23,572 lb

(10,692 kg); and North Carolina, 1,564,077 lb (709,453 kg).

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens

Act. This action is required by 50 CFR 648.162(e)(1)(i) through (iii), which was issued pursuant to section 304(b), and is exempted from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: September 29, 2023.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

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