



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

**NMFS Closes Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Incidental Longline Category Northern Area Fishery,
June 30, 2012**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is closing the incidental Longline category northern area fishery (north of 31°00' N. lat., near the Georgia/Florida border) for large medium and giant bluefin tuna (measuring 73" curved fork length or greater) on June 30, 2012. Based on the best available landings information for the incidental Longline category northern area bluefin tuna fishery that 23.7 mt of the available 29.9 mt has been landed as of June 14, 2012, NMFS projects that the Longline category northern area bluefin tuna subquota will be reached by the end of June. Given the extended duration of trips in the northern area, a closure of the Longline category northern area bluefin tuna fishery is warranted at this time. This action is being taken to prevent overharvest of the Longline category northern area bluefin tuna subquota.

Fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing bluefin tuna by Longline category vessels in the northern area, other than bluefin tuna caught inside the Northeast Distant gear restricted area (NED), is prohibited effective 11:30 p.m. on June 30, 2012, for the remainder of 2012. The Longline fishery in the NED remains open at this time. See below.

NMFS is required to file a closure notice with the Office of the Federal Register when a bluefin tuna quota is reached or is projected to be reached. On and after the effective date and time of such action, for the remainder of the fishing year, or for a specified period, fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing bluefin tuna under that quota is prohibited until the opening of the subsequent quota period or until a date a specified in the notice. Earlier this year, NMFS announced a closure of the Longline category *southern* area bluefin tuna fishery (which includes the Gulf of Mexico), effective May 29 through December 31, 2012 (77 FR 31546, May 29, 2012).

In addition to the subquotas for the Longline category northern and southern areas, 25 mt are allocated, consistent with the ICCAT recommendation regarding western bluefin tuna, for incidental catch of bluefin tuna by pelagic longline vessels fishing in the NED, an area far offshore the northeastern United States. The NED is the Atlantic Ocean area bounded by straight lines connecting the following coordinates in the order stated: 35°00' N. lat., 60°00' W. long.; 55°00' N. lat., 60°00' W. long.; 55°00' N. lat., 20°00' W. long.; 35°00' N. lat., 20°00' W. long.; 35°00' N. lat., 60°00' W. long. NMFS will continue to monitor bluefin tuna landings from the NED against the 25 mt allocated for that area and may take further action, if necessary.

This notice is a courtesy to help keep you informed about the fishery. For additional information, call (978) 281-9260, or go to www.hmspermits.gov. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register.

for Alan D. Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

JUN 21 2012

Date

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