



JUL 26 2012

NMFS Announces Final 2012 Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Quotas

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces final quota specifications for the 2012 bluefin tuna fisheries. NMFS is adjusting the annual U.S. baseline bluefin tuna quota that was recommended for 2011 and for 2012 by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to account for underharvest of the adjusted 2011 U.S. bluefin tuna quota, and is accounting for half of the estimated 2012 dead discards up front (i.e., at the beginning of the fishing year). As detailed below, the final rule:

- Accounts for half of the bluefin tuna dead discard estimate of 145.2 mt up front in the 2012 specifications process;
- Allocates the full 2012 baseline bluefin tuna quotas to all directed categories;
- Allocates 78.4 mt to the incidental Longline Category. It deducts from the Longline category half of the dead discard estimate of 145.2 mt and applies 76.2 of the 94.9 mt that is allowed to be carried forward to 2012 to the Longline category (i.e., 74.8 mt baseline quota – 72.6 mt dead discards + 76.2 mt underharvest = 78.4 mt adjusted quota (not including the 25-mt allocation for the Northeast Distant gear restricted area); and
- Holds the remainder of the 2011 underharvest that can be carried forward (18.7 mt) in the Reserve category, for an adjusted 2012 Reserve category quota of 41.8 mt.

In the proposed rule (77 FR 15712, March 16, 2012), NMFS used the 2010 bluefin tuna dead discard estimate of 122.3 mt as a proxy for potential 2012 bluefin tuna dead discards. The 2011 estimate, 145.2 mt, became available in mid-June 2012. NMFS is using the more recent estimate as a proxy in this final rule because it is the best available and most complete information NMFS currently has regarding dead discards.

Based on data available as of June 5, 2012, bluefin tuna landings for 2011 totaled 738.5 mt. Adding the 2011 dead discard estimate (145.2 mt) results in a preliminary 2011 total catch of 883.7 mt, which is 159.9 mt less than the amount of quota (inclusive of dead discards) allowed under ICCAT Recommendation 10-03 (1,043.6 mt). Per ICCAT recommendations, the maximum amount of unharvested 2011 bluefin tuna quota that the United States may carry forward to 2012 is ten percent of the baseline quota of 948.7 mt, which is 94.9 mt.

NMFS had proposed to carry the 94.9 mt of available underharvest forward to 2012 and distribute that amount in the same manner as specified for 2011 (i.e., half to the Longline category and half to the Reserve category), and indicated that any necessary adjustments to the 2012 specifications would be made in the final rule after considering updated 2011 landings information and the 2011 dead discard estimate.

During preparation of the final rule, NMFS closed both the southern and northern area incidental Longline bluefin tuna fishery for the remainder of the year on May 29 and June 30, 2012, respectively, because landings had met the codified subquotas for those areas (77 FR 31546, May 29, 2012 and 77 FR 38011, June 26, 2012). By providing an adjusted quota of 78.4 mt to



the Longline category, NMFS adjusts the Longline South and Longline North subquotas to the amount actually taken in those areas this year. Given that the incidental Longline fishery for bluefin tuna in these areas is over, accounting for these landings now is appropriate and allows for greater transparency than year-end accounting.

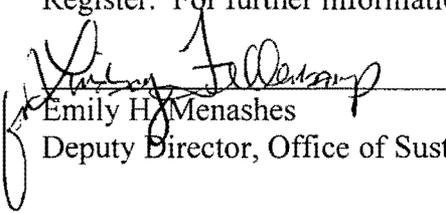
This action may provide some incentive for pelagic longline fishermen to reduce the bluefin tuna interactions that can result in dead discards. In these specifications, NMFS is balancing the needs of the pelagic longline fishery to continue fishing for swordfish and Atlantic tunas with the needs of directed bluefin tuna fisheries participants.

NMFS considers the deduction of half of the dead discard estimate from the Longline category a transitional approach from the method used for 2007 through 2010, in which the full dead discard estimate was deducted up front, and one that is appropriate again for 2012 as NMFS begins development of Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (Consolidated HMS FMP) (77 FR 24161, April 23, 2012). Several potential management measures included in the Amendment 7 scoping document (available at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/breaking_news.htm) are intended to reduce and account for bluefin tuna dead discards. After scoping has been completed, NMFS will prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed rule. In the meantime, management of the bluefin tuna fisheries continues under the Consolidated HMS FMP, implementing regulations, and ICCAT recommendations.

This action is consistent with the framework process set forth in the Consolidated HMS FMP and the implementing regulations. This action is supported by the environmental and economic analyses prepared for the Consolidated HMS FMP and for the 2011 final rule implementing bluefin tuna quotas and Atlantic tuna fisheries management measures (76 FR 39019, July 5, 2011). This action is consistent with the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act and is necessary to achieve domestic management objectives under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

See attached table for the final 2012 bluefin tuna quotas and quota specifications. To view the final rule and supporting documents, see www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/breaking_news.htm.

This notice is a courtesy to help keep you informed about the bluefin tuna fisheries. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact the HMS Management Division at (978) 281-9260.


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Date

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Final 2012 Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas and quota specifications (in metric tons)

Category (% share of baseline quota)	Baseline Allocation for 2011 and 2012 (per 2010 ICCAT Recommendation and Consolidated HMS FMP allocations)	2012 Quota Specifications		
		Dead Discard Deduction (1/2 of 2011 proxy of 145.2 mt)	2011 Underharvest to Carry Forward to 2012 (94.9 mt total)	Adjusted 2012 Fishing Year Quota
Total (100)	923.7*			946.0
Angling (19.7)	182.0 <u>SUBQUOTAS:</u> School 94.9 Reserve 17.6 North 36.5 South 40.8 LS/SM 82.9 North 39.1 South 43.8 Trophy 4.2 North 1.4 South 2.8			182.0 <u>SUBQUOTAS:</u> School 94.9 Reserve 17.6 North 36.5 South 40.8 LS/SM 82.9 North 39.1 South 43.8 Trophy 4.2 North 1.4 South 2.8
General (47.1)	435.1 <u>SUBQUOTAS:</u> Jan 23.1 Jun-Aug 217.6 Sept 115.3 Oct-Nov 56.6 Dec 22.6			435.1 <u>SUBQUOTAS:</u> Jan 23.1 Jun-Aug 217.6 Sept 115.3 Oct-Nov 56.6 Dec 22.6
Harpoon (3.9)	36.0			36.0
Purse Seine (18.6)	171.8			171.8
Longline (8.1)	74.8 <u>SUBQUOTAS:</u> North (-NED) 29.9 NED 25.0* South 44.9	-72.6	+76.2 North 26.7 South 39.5	78.4 <u>SUBQUOTAS:</u> North (-NED) 27.6 NED 25.0* South 50.8
Trap (0.1)	0.9			0.9
Reserve (2.5)	23.1		+18.7	41.8

*25-mt ICCAT set-aside to account for bycatch of bluefin tuna in pelagic longline fisheries in the Northeast Distant gear restricted area not included in totals at top of table.