



NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna General Category Fishery: NMFS Adjusts Daily Retention Limit for November-December 2013

November 27, 2013

Actions being taken and important dates

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) adjusts the General category (commercial handgear) Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) retention limit to **five large medium or giant BFT** (i.e., five BFT measuring 73" or greater) per vessel per day/trip (up from the current level of three per vessel per day/trip), effective November 27 through December 31, 2013.

NMFS takes this action after considering the regulatory determination criteria regarding inseason adjustments, which include, among other things, available quota, fishery performance in recent years, the anticipated availability of BFT on the fishing grounds, the effects of the adjustment on the BFT stock and on accomplishing the objectives of the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan. This adjustment is intended to provide additional opportunity to harvest the U.S. BFT quota without exceeding it, maintain equitable distribution of fishing opportunities; help achieve optimum yield in the General category BFT fishery; and collect a broad range of data for stock monitoring purposes.

Based on General category landings to date, it is highly unlikely that General category quota of 435.1 mt will be filled with the current limit of three BFT/vessel. A five-fish limit will provide increased opportunity for harvest to approach the available subquota without exceeding it while also maintaining equitable distribution of fishing opportunities, helping to achieve optimum yield, and collecting a broad range of data for stock monitoring purposes.

Who is affected?

The General category daily retention limit applies to vessels permitted in the **commercial** Atlantic tunas General category and the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Charter/Headboat category while fishing commercially. This limit is effective for all areas except for the Gulf of Mexico, which is designated as BFT spawning grounds and where NMFS does not allow targeted fishing. Regardless of the duration of a fishing trip, the daily retention limit applies upon landing. For example (and specific to the November-December 2013 limit), whether a vessel fishing under the General category limit takes a two-day trip or makes two trips in one day, the daily limit of five fish may not be exceeded upon landing.

NMFS will continue to monitor the fishery closely through dealer reports. Depending on fishing effort and catch rates, NMFS may determine that additional retention limit adjustment or fishery closure is necessary to ensure available quota is not exceeded or to enhance scientific data collection from, and fishing opportunities in, all geographic areas.

NMFS regulations at 50 CFR 635.21(a)(1) require that all BFT that are released be handled in a manner that will maximize survivability, and without removing the fish from the water. For additional information on safe handling, see the Careful Catch and Release brochure available at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/.

This notice is a courtesy to BFT fishery permit holders to help keep you informed about the fishery. For additional information, call (888) 872-8862 or (978) 281-9260, or go to www.hmspermits.noaa.gov. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register.

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