



NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna General Category Fishery Closing Friday, February 15, 2013

Announcement date: February 14, 2013

Actions being taken and important dates

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closes the Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) General category fishery for large medium and giant BFT (measuring 73 inches curved fork length or greater) **effective 11:30 p.m. local time on February 15, 2013**, until it reopens on June 1, 2013, for the June through August period. Based on the best available BFT landings information for the General category BFT fishery (i.e., 20.4 mt of the available 23.1 mt landed as of February 12), NMFS has determined that the General category January BFT subquota will be reached by February 15, 2013. Although it is called the “January subquota,” the regulations allow this fishery to continue until the 23.1-mt subquota is reached, or March 31, whichever comes first.

Retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant BFT by persons aboard vessels permitted in the Atlantic tunas General and Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Charter/Headboat categories (while fishing commercially) must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time on February 15, 2013, through May 31, 2013. The intent of this closure is to prevent overharvest of the General category January BFT subquota. Catch-and-release fishing is permissible as described below.

Who is affected?

This closure applies to vessels permitted in the commercial Atlantic tunas General category and the HMS Charter/Headboat category while fishing commercially. For more information on BFT fishing regulations, including recreational size and retention limits, please go to <http://hmspermits.noaa.gov>.

Fishermen may catch and release or tag and release BFT of all sizes, subject to the requirements of HMS catch-and-release and tag-and-release programs. NMFS regulations 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 <http://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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