



Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Angling Category Fishery: Southern Area Trophy Fishery Closure and Daily Retention Limit Adjustment (for Northern and Southern Areas)

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is taking the following two actions regarding the **recreational** Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) fishery, effective April 4 through December 31, 2013:

(1) Closure of the large medium/giant “trophy” BFT (73” or greater) fishery south of 39°18’N (off Great Egg Inlet, NJ), effective 11:30 p.m. local time, April 4, 2013.

Information from the NMFS Automated Landings Reporting System and the North Carolina Tagging Program indicate that the codified southern trophy quota (2.8 mt) has been taken.

The annual Angling category trophy limit of one large medium or giant BFT per vessel (73” or greater) remains in effect for vessels fishing in the *northern* area.

(2) Adjustment of the recreational retention limit, effective April 4, 2013, as follows:

Permit Category	Retention Limit per Vessel per Day/Trip
HMS Angling	1 school, large school, or small medium BFT (27 to <73”)
HMS Charter/Headboat (when fishing recreationally)	1 school BFT (27 to <47”) and 1 large school/small medium BFT (47 to <73”)

Based on current considerations of the available quota, fishery performance in recent years, and the availability of BFT on the fishing grounds, NMFS has determined that the Angling category retention limit applicable to HMS Charter/Headboat category participants (when fishing recreationally) should be adjusted from the default level of 1 school, large school, **or** small medium BFT (27 to <73”). NMFS considers that implementation of separate limits for private and charter/headboat vessels is appropriate, recognizing the different nature, socio-economic needs, and recent landings results of the two components of the recreational BFT fishery.

NMFS takes these actions to be consistent with the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan and to prevent overharvest of the 2013 Angling category quota. In taking this action, NMFS considered the regulatory determination criteria regarding inseason adjustments, including available quota, fishery performance in recent years, and the availability of BFT on the fishing grounds.

NMFS anticipates that these BFT daily retention limits will result in landings during 2013 that would not exceed the available Angling category subquotas (as codified in 2011). NMFS will monitor 2013 landings closely and will make further Angling category adjustments via inseason action, including closure, if warranted.

Who is affected?

Both the BFT daily retention limit adjustment and the southern area trophy BFT fishery closure affect only the recreational BFT fishery. The *daily* retention limits are effective for all areas except the Gulf of Mexico, the designated spawning grounds for BFT and where NMFS prohibits targeted fishing. Regardless of the duration of a fishing trip, the daily retention limit applies upon landing. The southern area trophy BFT fishery closure applies in areas south of 39°18'N (off Great Egg Inlet, NJ), including the Gulf of Mexico. Note that when the southern trophy fishery is open, recreational landings of one large medium or giant BFT are allowed only if caught incidentally to fishing for other species.

Anglers may catch and release or tag and release BFT of all sizes, subject to the requirements of the HMS catch-and-release and tag-and-release programs at § 635.26. Anglers are also reminded that all BFT that are released must be handled in a manner that will maximize survivability, and without removing the fish from the water, consistent with requirements at § 635.21(a)(1). 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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