



NMFS Announces Proposed 2013 Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Quotas

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes quota specifications for the 2013 Atlantic bluefin tuna fishery. The proposed rule would adjust the U.S. baseline bluefin tuna quota and subquotas to account for allowable unharvested 2012 quota and to account for a portion of the estimated 2013 dead discards up front (i.e., at the beginning of the fishing year). This action is proposed in accordance with the framework process set forth in the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (Consolidated HMS FMP), and is supported by the environmental and economic analyses prepared for the Consolidated HMS FMP and the 2011 final rule implementing Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas and Atlantic tuna fisheries management measures (76 FR 39019, July 5, 2011), and the Supplemental Environmental Assessment prepared for these 2013 quota specifications. 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.

Currently, the best available annual estimate of dead discards for 2012 and that can be expected for 2013 is the 2011 estimate of 145.2 mt. Based on the best, currently available landings data and dead discard estimate (as of February 26, 2013), NMFS anticipates an underharvest of the 2012 U.S. adjusted bluefin tuna quota of approximately 185 mt. Per ICCAT recommendations, the maximum amount of unharvested 2012 quota that the United States may carry forward to 2013 is 94.9 mt. As detailed in the attached table, the proposed rule would specifically:

- Account for half of the dead discard estimate of 145.2 mt up front in the 2013 specifications process;
- Allocate the full 2013 baseline quotas to all directed categories;
- Allocate 49.7 mt to the Longline Category. This amount is achieved by deducting from the Longline category half of the dead discard estimate of 145.2 mt and applying to the Longline category half of the underharvest allowed to be carried forward to 2013 (i.e., $74.8 \text{ mt baseline quota} - 72.6 \text{ mt dead discards} + 47.5 \text{ mt underharvest} = 49.7 \text{ mt adjusted quota}$, not including the 25-mt allocation for the Northeast Distant Gear Restricted Area);
- Hold the remainder of the 2013 underharvest that can be carried forward (47.4 mt) in the Reserve category, for an adjusted 2013 Reserve category quota of 70.5 mt, which will be held in the Reserve category until later in the fishing year for maximum flexibility in accounting for 2013 total landings and dead discards.

NMFS proposed this method in 2011 and 2012 as a transitional approach from the method used in 2007 through 2010 and considers it appropriate again for 2013 pending development of an FMP amendment to address several of the long-standing challenges facing the fishery and will examine, among other things, revisiting quota allocations; reducing and accounting for dead discards; adding or modifying time/area closures or gear-restricted areas; and improving the

reporting and monitoring of dead discards and landings in all categories. NMFS anticipates that draft Amendment 7 will publish in mid-2013.

See attached table for the proposed 2013 BFT quotas and quota specifications. To view the proposed rule and supporting documents, see www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/breaking_news.htm.

NMFS plans to make daily retention limit adjustments as needed for the 2013 fishing year via Federal Register notices separate from the final rule.

Public comment requested

NMFS will make any necessary adjustments to the 2013 specifications in the final rule after considering updated 2012 landings information and the final dead discard estimate for 2012. For additional details on the range of possible outcomes resulting from updated 2012 landings and dead discard information, please see the proposed rule.

You may submit comments (identified by “NOAA-NMFS-2013-0042”) through May 13, 2013, by using any one of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submissions:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0042, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- **Mail:** Sarah McLaughlin, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930
- **Fax:** 978-281-9340, Attn: Sarah McLaughlin

Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NMFS. All comments received are a part of the public record and generally will be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

NMFS will hold two public hearings to receive comments from fishery participants and other members of the public regarding the proposed rule, as follows:

April 29, 2013, 2 to 4 p.m., 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA

May 3, 2013, 1 to 3 p.m., NMFS Science Center, 1301 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD.

This notice is a courtesy to fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. 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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Proposed 2013 Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas and quota specifications (in metric tons)

Category (% share of baseline quota)	Baseline Allocation (per current ICCAT Recommendation and Consolidated HMS FMP allocations)	2013 Quota Specifications		
		Dead Discard Deduction (1/2 of 2011 proxy of 145.2 mt)	2012 Underharvest to Carry Forward to 2013 (94.9 mt total)	Adjusted 2013 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	+47.5	49.7 <u>SUBQUOTAS:</u> North (-NED) 19.9 NED 25.0* South 29.8
Trap (0.1)	0.9			0.9
Reserve (2.5)	23.1		+47.4	70.5

*25-mt ICCAT set-aside to account for bycatch of BFT in pelagic longline fisheries in the NED. Not included in totals at top of table.