



# Proposed Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Quota Rule

Highly Migratory Species Management Division  
June 2015

NOAA FISHERIES

A photograph of an underwater scene showing green seagrass blades and small dark spots, likely fish or debris, against a light blue background. This image is partially obscured by a dark blue banner at the bottom of the slide.

# Need for Action

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- The proposed rule is necessary to implement the 2014 binding recommendation of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), specifically to implement the U.S. Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) quota.
- NMFS also proposes minor modifications to the regulatory text regarding Atlantic tuna purse seine auxiliary vessel activity under the "transfer at sea" provisions.



# 2014 WBFT Recommendation (Rec. 14-05)

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- Increased overall TAC from 1,750 mt to 2,000 mt (inclusive of dead discards) for 2015 and 2016
  - Expected to allow for continued stock growth under both the low and high recruitment scenarios
  - U.S. baseline quota increased from 923.7 mt to 1,058.79 mt
  - Total U.S. quota, including 25 mt to account for bycatch related to pelagic longline fisheries in the Northeast Distant gear restricted area: 1,083.79 mt
- Maintains school BFT limit of no more than 10% by weight of the total U.S. quota (i.e., 108.4 mt for the United States)
- Maintains 10% cap on underharvest that can be carried forward (i.e., 94.9 mt of 2014 underharvest for the United States)



# Proposed Quotas Overview

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- NMFS would implement the baseline annual U.S. BFT quota of 1,058.79 mt and divide it among the domestic fishing categories consistent with the process established in Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan, as shown in Table 1.
- A comparison of the current and proposed baseline quotas and subquotas is shown in Table 2.
- The baseline annual quota and subquotas would be effective for the 2015 fishing year and annually until changed.

**Table 1. Proposed annual Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas (in metric tons)**

Category	Annual Baseline Quotas and Subquotas		
	Quota	Subquotas	
<b>General</b>	<b>466.7</b>		
		January-March	24.7
		June-August	233.3
		September	123.7
		October-November	60.7
		December	24.3
<b>Harpoon</b>	<b>38.6</b>		
<b>Longline</b>	<b>148.3</b>		
<b>Trap</b>	<b>1.0</b>		
<b>Purse Seine</b>	<b>184.3*</b>		
<b>Angling</b>	<b>195.2</b>		
		School	108.4
		Reserve	20.1
		North of 39°18' N. lat.	41.7
		South of 39°18' N. lat.	46.6
		Large School/Small Medium	82.3
		North of 39°18' N. lat.	38.9
		South of 39°18' N. lat.	43.5
		Trophy	4.5
		North of 39°18' N. lat.	1.5
		South of 39°18' N. lat.	1.5
		Gulf of Mexico	1.5
<b>Reserve</b>	<b>24.8*</b>		
<b>U.S. Baseline BFT Quota</b>	<b>1,058.9</b>		
<b>Total U.S. Quota, including 25 mt for NED (Longline)</b>	<b>1,083.9</b>		

\*Baseline amount shown. Does not reflect the annual adjustment process (for the Purse Seine and Reserve category quotas) adopted in Amendment 7.

**Table 2. Comparison of the current and proposed baseline quotas and subquotas**

	Currently codified	Proposed
<b>ICCAT Recommendation</b>	10-03; 12-02; 13-09 (TAC=1,750 mt)	<b>14-05</b> (TAC=2,000 mt)
<b>Allocation scheme</b>	Per Amendment 7	<b>Per Amendment 7</b>
	mt	mt
<b>Baseline Annual U.S. quota</b>	923.7	<b>1,058.79</b>
<b>Suballocations:</b>		
<b>General category</b>	403	<b>466.7</b>
<b>Harpoon category</b>	33.4	<b>38.6</b>
<b>Longline category</b>	137.3	<b>148.3</b>
<b>Trap category</b>	0.9	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Purse Seine category</b>	159.1	<b>184.3</b>
<b>Angling category</b>	168.6	<b>195.2</b>
<b>Reserve category</b>	21.4	<b>24.8</b>
<b>Northeast Distant gear restricted area (NED) set-aside (for use by Longline category)</b>	25	<b>25</b>
<b>Annual Total U.S. quota</b>	<b>948.7</b>	<b>1,083.79</b>

**Comparison of *baseline* annual quota and subquotas only.** Does not reflect any adjustments such as inseason transfers or the annual adjustment process (for the Purse Seine and Reserve category quotas) adopted in Amendment 7.

# Proposed Quotas Overview, continued

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- The United States implements the 10% limit on the annual harvest of BFT measuring <115 cm (straight fork length) by limiting the harvest of school BFT (27 - <47") as appropriate to not exceed 10% (108.4 mt) of the annual U.S. BFT quota over each two-consecutive-year period (starting with 2015-2016).
- Recent annual school landings relative to total U.S. quota:
  - U.S. 2011-2012 average: 6.3%
  - 2013: 3.3%
  - 2014: 3.0%



# Current Purse Seine Regulations

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An owner or operator of a vessel for which an Atlantic Tunas Purse Seine category permit has been issued "may transfer large medium and giant BFT at sea from the net of the catching vessel to another vessel for which an Atlantic Tunas Purse Seine category permit has been issued, provided the amount transferred does not cause the receiving vessel to exceed its currently authorized vessel allocation, including incidental catch limits."



# Proposed Clarification of Regulatory Text

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NMFS is proposing minor modifications to clarify that this text was not meant to allow "transfer at sea," which clearly is prohibited by ICCAT Rec. 14-05, but only to allow the routine, limited operations of an auxiliary vessel (i.e., a skiff) that is assisting its associated purse seine vessel in catch operations for BFT.

- Such activities are not the type of activity meant to be prohibited by Rec. 14-05.
- This clarification would be administrative, reflect current practice, and would have no environmental impacts or effects on current fishing operations.



# Reminder re: Inseason Actions

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As in past years, NMFS is making daily retention limit adjustments for the 2015 fishing year via Federal Register notices separate from the final rule.

e.g., in May, NMFS announced:

- General category limit (June through August)
- 2015 Angling category limit
- Purse Seine category BFT fishery start date

**Trophy South BFT fishery closed June 7, 2015**

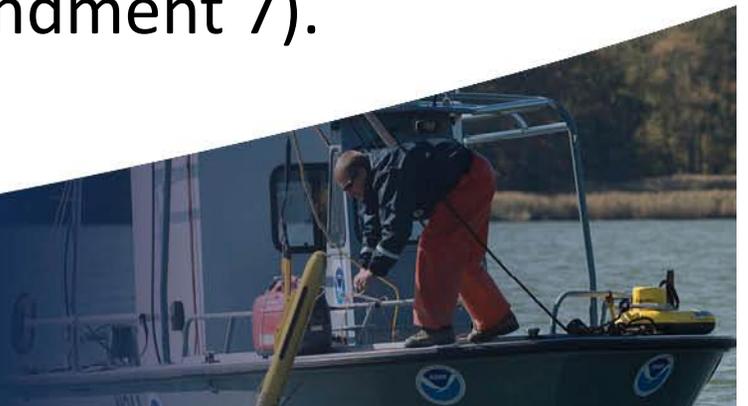
# Adjustment for 2014 Underharvest

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Preliminary 2014 underharvest: ~218 mt (using the 160.6-mt 2013 dead discard estimate as a proxy)

ICCAT limit on amount that can be carried forward to 2015 (per Rec. 14-05): 94.9 mt

The final 2013 estimate and preliminary 2014 estimate will be available soon, and NMFS will automatically augment the Reserve category quota to the extent that underharvest is available (per Amendment 7).



# Timeline for Rulemaking

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- Proposed rule published June 12, 2015
- Comment period ends July 13, 2015
- NMFS will hold a public hearing conference call and webinar on July 1, 2015, from 2-4 p.m. EDT, to allow for an additional opportunity for interested members of the public from all geographic areas to submit verbal comments on the proposed quota specifications. See details on ListServ.
- Intend to publish final rule late July 2015



# Submitting Comments

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Please send comments by July 13, 2015 to:

[www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)

Keyword: “NOAA-NMFS-2015-0011”

or

Mail:

NMFS – HMS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

Identify comments with: “NOAA-NMFS-2015-0011”

*Please do not submit electronic comments directly to NMFS staff*



# Comments? Questions?

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- For further information on this rulemaking or Atlantic tunas management, contact Brad McHale or Sarah McLaughlin at (978) 281-9260
- For information on other HMS issues, contact the HMS Management Division at (301) 427-8503

