

## Fishery Conservation and Management

## § 648.291

(d) *Annual specification process.* The Tilefish FMP Monitoring Committee (Monitoring Committee) will meet after the completion of each stock assessment or at the request of the Council Chairman. The Monitoring Committee shall review tilefish landings information and any other relevant available data to determine if the annual quota requires modification to respond to any changes to the stock's biological reference points or to ensure that the rebuilding schedule is maintained. The Monitoring Committee will consider whether any additional management measures or revisions to existing measures are necessary to ensure that the TAL will not be exceeded. Based on that review, the Monitoring Committee will provide a recommendation to the Tilefish Committee of the Council. Based on these recommendations and any public comment received, the Tilefish Committee shall recommend to the Council the appropriate quota and management measures for the next fishing year. The Council shall review these recommendations and any public comments received, and recommend to the Regional Administrator, at least 120 days prior to the beginning of the next fishing year, the appropriate TAL for the next fishing year, the percentage of TAL allocated to research quota, and any management measures to assure that the TAL will not be exceeded. The Council's recommendations must include supporting documentation, as appropriate, concerning the environmental and economic impacts of the recommendations. The Regional Administrator shall review these recommendations, and after such review, NMFS will publish a proposed rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER specifying the annual TAL and any management measures to assure that the TAL will not be exceeded. After considering public comments, NMFS will publish a final rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER to implement a TAL and any management measures. The previous year's specifications will remain effective unless revised through the specification process and/or the research quota process described in paragraph (e) of this section. NMFS will issue notification in the FEDERAL REGISTER if the pre-

vious year's specifications will not be changed.

(e) *Research quota.* See § 648.21(g).

[66 FR 49145, Sept. 26, 2001, as amended at 74 FR 42599, Aug. 24, 2009]

### § 648.291 Individual fishing quota.

(a) *Individual fishing quota (IFQ) allocation permits.* After adjustments for incidental catch, research set asides, and overages, as appropriate, during the first year of the IFQ Program, the Regional Administrator shall divide the Category quotas specified pursuant to § 648.290(b), among the owners of vessels that meet the qualification criteria specified in paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (ii) of this section. Initial allocations shall be made in accordance with paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, in the form of an IFQ Allocation permit issued to a qualifying vessel owner, who files a complete application, specifying the allocation percentage of the IFQ TAL that the owner is entitled to harvest. This allocation percentage shall be calculated pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section and converted annually into pounds of tilefish. Amounts of IFQ of 0.5 lb (0.23 kg) or smaller created by this allocation shall be rounded downward to the nearest whole number, and amounts of IFQ greater than 0.5 lb (0.23 kg) created by this division shall be rounded upward to the nearest whole number, so that IFQ allocations are specified in whole pounds. Allocations in subsequent years shall be made by applying the allocation percentages that exist on September 1 of a given fishing year to the IFQ TAL pursuant to § 648.290(b), subject to any deductions for overages pursuant to paragraph (f) of this section. These allocations shall be issued in the form of an annual IFQ Allocation permit.

(1) *Qualifying criteria.* (i) A person or entity qualifies for an IFQ Allocation permit if they: Own a vessel with a fishing history that includes a valid tilefish limited access permit for the 2005 permit year and reported landings of tilefish from 2001 through 2005 that constituted at least 0.5 percent of the total landings in the tilefish Category for which it was permitted; or

(ii) Hold a valid confirmation of permit history (CPH) that meets the criteria in paragraph (a)(1)(i) of this section.

(2) [Reserved]

(b) *Application*—(1) *General*. Applicants for a permit under this section must submit a completed application on an appropriate form obtained from NMFS. The application must be filled out completely and signed by the applicant. Each application must include a declaration of all interests in IFQ allocations, as defined in § 648.2, listed by IFQ Allocation permit number, and must list all Federal vessel permit numbers for all vessels that an applicant owns or leases that would be authorized to possess tilefish pursuant to the IFQ Allocation permit. The Regional Administrator will notify the applicant of any deficiency in the application.

(i) *Initial application*. An applicant shall submit an application for an initial IFQ Allocation permit no later than 6 months after the effective date of this regulation.

(ii) *Renewal applications*. Applications to renew an IFQ Allocation permit must be received by September 15 to be processed in time for the start of the November 1 fishing year. Renewal applications received after this date may not be approved, and a new permit may not be issued before the start of the next fishing year. An IFQ Allocation permit holder must renew his/her IFQ Allocation permit on an annual basis by submitting an application for such permit prior to the end of the fishing year for which the permit is required.

(2) *Issuance*. Except as provided in subpart D of 15 CFR part 904, and provided an application for such permit is submitted by September 15, as specified in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section, NMFS shall issue annual IFQ Allocation permits on or before October 31 to those who hold permanent allocation as of September 1 of the current fishing year. During the period between September 1 and October 31, transfer of IFQ is not permitted, as described in paragraph (e)(4) of this section. The IFQ Allocation permit shall specify the allocation percentage of the IFQ TAL which the IFQ permit holder is authorized to harvest.

(3) *Duration*. An annual IFQ Allocation permit is valid until October 31 of each fishing year unless it is suspended, modified, or revoked pursuant to 15 CFR part 904, or revised due to a transfer of all or part of the allocation percentage under paragraph (e) of this section. All Federal vessel permit numbers that are listed on the IFQ Allocation permit are authorized to possess tilefish pursuant to the IFQ Allocation permit until the end of the fishing year or until NMFS receives written notification from the IFQ Allocation permit holder that the vessel is no longer authorized to possess tilefish pursuant to the subject permit. An IFQ Allocation permit holder that wishes to authorize an additional vessel(s) to possess tilefish pursuant to the IFQ Allocation permit must send written notification to NMFS that includes the vessel permit number, and the dates on which the IFQ Allocation permit holder desires the vessel to be authorized to land IFQ tilefish pursuant to the IFQ Allocation permit to be effective.

(4) *Alteration*. An annual IFQ Allocation permit that is altered, erased, or mutilated is invalid.

(5) *Replacement*. The Regional Administrator may issue a replacement permit upon written application of the annual IFQ Allocation permit holder.

(6) *Transfer*. The annual IFQ Allocation permit is valid only for the person to whom it is issued. All or part of the allocation specified in the IFQ Allocation permit may be transferred in accordance with paragraph (e) of this section.

(7) *Abandonment or voluntary relinquishment*. Any IFQ Allocation permit that is voluntarily relinquished to the Regional Administrator, or deemed to have been voluntarily relinquished for failure to pay a recoverable cost fee, in accordance with the requirements specified in paragraph (h)(2) of this section, or for failure to renew in accordance with paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section, shall not be reissued or renewed in a subsequent year.

(c) *Initial allocation formulas*—(1) *General*. An individual fishing quota of tilefish shall be calculated as a percentage of the IFQ TAL, based on the following formulas:

(i) *Full-time vessels.* The owner of a vessel that held a Full-time (Category A or B; 66 percent of the adjusted TAL for Category A, and 15 percent of the adjusted TAL for Category B) limited access permit in 2005 shall receive an allocation based on the division of the vessel's average landings from 2001 through 2005 by the total average landings in their respective Category during this same time period to derive a percentage. This percentage shall then be applied to the IFQ TAL to derive an IFQ allocation percentage of the IFQ TAL that shall also be converted to an amount in pounds. If the landings of all qualified vessels yield percentages that are less than the allocation of the entire adjusted quota, the remainder shall be distributed among the qualified vessels based on the ratio of their respective percentages. Vessel landings during this time period will be calculated using NMFS interactive voice reporting (IVR) data for 2002 through 2005, and NMFS dealer data submitted for 2001 (excluding landings reported from May 15, 2003, through May 31, 2004, as a result of the *Hadaja v. Evans* lawsuit).

(ii) *Part-time vessels.* An owner of a vessel that held a Part-time (Category C) limited access permit in 2005 shall receive an allocation based on the equal division of the Category C quota (19 percent of the adjusted TAL) among vessels that had landings during the 2001 through 2005 time period, to derive an IFQ allocation percentage of the IFQ TAL. This percentage shall also be converted to an amount in pounds. Vessel landings during this time period will be calculated using NMFS IVR data for 2002 through 2005, and NMFS dealer data submitted for 2001 (excluding landings reported from May 15, 2003, through May 31, 2004, as a result of the *Hadaja v. Evans* lawsuit).

(2) [Reserved]

(d) *Appeal of denial of permit—(1) General.* Any applicant denied an IFQ Allocation permit may appeal to the Regional Administrator within 30 days of the notice of denial. Any such appeal shall be in writing. The only ground for appeal is that the Regional Administrator erred in concluding that the vessel did not meet the criteria in this section. The appeal must set forth the

basis for the applicant's belief that the decision of the Regional Administrator was made in error.

(2) *Appeal review.* The Regional Administrator shall appoint a designee who shall make the initial decision on the appeal. The appellant may appeal the initial decision to the Regional Administrator by submitting a request in writing within 30 days of the notice of the initial decision. If requested, the appeal may be presented at a hearing before a hearing officer appointed by the Regional Administrator. A hearing will only be held if the applicant presents credible documentation with the hearing request to show that the Regional Administrator made an error in determining the ownership of a tilefish limited access permit, the accuracy of amount of landings, or the correct assignment of landings to the permit holder. If the appellant does not request a review of the initial decision within 30 days, the initial decision is the final administrative decision of the Department of Commerce. If a hearing is held, the hearing officer shall make findings and a recommendation based upon the administrative record, including that generated during any hearing, pertaining to the application and appeal within NMFS to the Regional Administrator, which shall be advisory only. Upon receiving the findings and the recommendations from the hearing officer, the Regional Administrator shall issue a final decision on the appeal. The Regional Administrator's decision is the final administrative decision of the Department of Commerce.

(3) *Status of vessels pending appeal.* Any applicant denied an IFQ Allocation permit may request the issuance of a letter of authorization (LOA) from the Regional Administrator to continue to fish for tilefish after the effective date of the final regulations, pending the resolution of the relevant appeal, if his/her vessel was issued a valid tilefish permit in 2008. This LOA would allow a vessel to continue to fish for tilefish. If the appeal is finally denied, the LOA will become invalid 5 days after the receipt of the notice of final denial from the Regional Administrator.

(4) *LOA reserve.* During the first year of the IFQ program, the Regional Administrator will reserve 15 percent of the IFQ TAL, prior to initial distribution of IFQ allocations, to allow for continued fishing under an LOA, as specified in paragraph (d)(3) of this section, pending resolution of the relevant appeal. Any portion of the reserve remaining after the appeals process has been completed will be distributed to IFQ Allocation permit holders based on their allocation percentages as soon as possible during that fishing year. If vessels fishing under an LOA are projected to land a portion of the IFQ TAL that NMFS determines would unreasonably diminish the allocations of IFQ Allocation permit holders, the Regional Administrator will impose a trip limit to reduce the landings of vessels fishing under an LOA. If vessels fishing under LOAs, pending resolution of the appeals process, are projected to harvest an amount of tilefish in excess of the 15-percent reserve, the allocations for all IFQ Allocation permit holders will be reduced proportionately during that fishing year, to increase the amount of the reserve determined to be necessary. If an IFQ Allocation permit holder has no allocation remaining at the time of the proportionate reduction of all IFQ allocations, this reduction will constitute an overage and will be deducted from the IFQ Allocation permit holder's subsequent fishing year allocation.

(e) *Transferring IFQ allocations—(1) Temporary transfers.* Unless otherwise restricted by the provisions in paragraph (e)(3) of this section, the owner of an IFQ allocation may transfer the entire IFQ allocation, or a portion of the IFQ allocation, to any person or entity eligible to own a documented vessel under the terms of 46 U.S.C. 12102(a). Temporary IFQ allocation transfers shall be effective only for the fishing year in which the temporary transfer is requested and processed, unless the applicant specifically requests that the transfer be processed for the subsequent fishing year. The Regional Administrator has final approval authority for all temporary IFQ allocation transfer requests. The approval of a temporary transfer may be rescinded if the Regional Administrator finds

that an emergency has rendered the lessee unable to fish for the transferred IFQ allocation, but only if none of the transferred allocation has been landed.

(2) *Permanent transfers.* Unless otherwise restricted by the provisions in paragraph (e)(3) of this section, an owner of an IFQ allocation may permanently transfer the entire IFQ allocation, or a portion of the IFQ Allocation, to any person or entity eligible to own a documented vessel under the terms of 46 U.S.C. 12102(a). The Regional Administrator has final approval authority for all permanent IFQ allocation transfer requests.

(3) *IFQ allocation transfer restrictions.*  
(i) If IFQ allocation is temporarily transferred to any eligible entity, it may not be transferred by the transferee again within the same fishing year, unless the transfer is rescinded due to an emergency, as described in paragraph (e)(1) of this section.

(ii) A transfer of IFQ will not be approved by the Regional Administrator if it would result in an entity owning, or having an interest in, a percentage of IFQ allocation exceeding 49 percent of the total tilefish adjusted TAL.

(iii) If the owner of an IFQ allocation leases additional quota from another IFQ Allocation permit holder, any landings associated with this transferred quota would be deducted from the total yearly landings of the lessee, before his/her base allocation, if any exists, for the purpose of calculating the appropriate cost-recovery fee. As described in paragraph (h) of this section, a tilefish IFQ Allocation permit holder with a permanent allocation shall incur a cost-recovery fee, based on the value of landings of tilefish authorized under his/her tilefish IFQ Allocation permit, including allocation that he/she leases to another IFQ Allocation permit holder.

(4) *Application for an IFQ allocation transfer.* Any IFQ Allocation permit holder applying for either permanent or temporary transfer of IFQ allocation must submit a completed IFQ Allocation Transfer Form, available from NMFS. The IFQ Allocation Transfer Form must be submitted to the NMFS Northeast Regional Office at least 30

days before the date on which the applicant desires to have the IFQ allocation transfer effective. The Regional Administrator shall notify the applicants of any deficiency in the application pursuant to this section. Applications for IFQ allocation transfers must be received by September 1 to be processed for the current fishing year.

(i) *Application information requirements.* An application to transfer IFQ allocation must include the following information: The type of transfer (either temporary or permanent), the signature of both parties involved, the price paid for the transfer, indicate eligibility to receive IFQ allocation, the amount of allocation to be transferred, and a declaration, by IFQ Allocation permit number, of all the IFQ allocations that the person or entity receiving the IFQ allocation has an interest in. The person or entity receiving the IFQ allocation must indicate the permit numbers of all Federally permitted vessels that will possess or land their IFQ allocation. Information obtained from the IFQ Allocation Transfer Form is confidential pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1881a.

(ii) *Approval of IFQ transfer applications.* Unless an application to transfer IFQ is denied according to paragraph (e)(4)(iii) of this section, the Regional Administrator shall issue confirmation of application approval in the form of a new or updated IFQ Allocation permit to the parties involved in the transfer within 30 days of receipt of a completed application.

(iii) *Denial of transfer application.* The Regional Administrator may reject an application to transfer IFQ allocation for the following reasons: The application is incomplete; the transferor does not possess a valid tilefish IFQ Allocation permit; the transferor's or transferee's vessel or tilefish IFQ Allocation permit has been sanctioned, pursuant to an enforcement proceeding under 15 CFR part 904; the transfer will result in the transferee having a tilefish IFQ Allocation that exceeds 49 percent of the adjusted TAL allocated to IFQ Allocation permit holders; the transfer is to a person or entity that is not eligible to own a documented vessel under the terms of 46 U.S.C. 12102(a); or any other failure to meet the requirements of

this subpart. Upon denial of an application to transfer IFQ allocation, the Regional Administrator shall send a letter to the applicant describing the reason(s) for the denial. The decision by the Regional Administrator is the final decision of the Department of Commerce; there is no opportunity for an administrative appeal.

(f) *IFQ allocation overages.* Any IFQ allocation that is exceeded, including amounts of tilefish landed by a lessee in excess of a temporary transfer of IFQ allocation, will be reduced by the amount of the overage in the subsequent fishing year(s). If an IFQ allocation overage is not deducted from the appropriate allocation before the IFQ Allocation permit is issued for the subsequent fishing year, a revised IFQ Allocation permit reflecting the deduction of the overage shall be issued by NMFS. If the allocation can not be reduced in the subsequent fishing year because the full allocation has already been landed or transferred, the IFQ Allocation permit will indicate a reduced allocation for the amount of the overage in the next fishing year.

(g) *IFQ allocation acquisition restriction.* No person or entity may acquire more than 49 percent of the annual adjusted tilefish TAL, specified pursuant to §648.290, at any point during a fishing year. For purposes of this paragraph, acquisition includes any permanent or temporary transfer of IFQ. The calculation of IFQ allocation for purposes of the restriction on acquisition includes IFQ allocation interests held by: A company in which the IFQ holder is a shareholder, officer, or partner; an immediate family member; or a company in which the IFQ holder is a part owner or partner.

(h) *IFQ cost-recovery.* A fee shall be determined as described in paragraph (h)(1) of this section, and collected to recover the costs associated with management, data collection and analysis, and enforcement of the IFQ program. A tilefish IFQ Allocation permit holder shall be responsible for paying the fee assessed by NMFS. A tilefish IFQ Allocation permit holder with a permanent allocation shall incur a cost-recovery fee, based on the value of landings of tilefish authorized under his/her

tilefish IFQ Allocation permit, including allocation that he/she leases to another IFQ Allocation permit holder. A tilefish IFQ Allocation permit holder, with a permanent allocation, shall be responsible for submitting this payment to NMFS once per year, as specified in paragraph (h)(2) of this section. For the purpose of this section, the cost-recovery billing period is defined as the full calendar year, beginning with the start of the first calendar year following the effective date of the final regulations. NMFS will create an annual IFQ allocation bill for each cost-recovery billing period and provide it to each IFQ Allocation permit holder. The bill will include annual information regarding the amount and value of IFQ allocation landed during the prior cost-recovery billing period, and the associated cost-recovery fees. NMFS will also create a report that will detail the costs incurred by NMFS, for the management, enforcement, and data collection and analysis associated with the IFQ allocation program during the prior cost-recovery billing period.

(1) *NMFS determination of the total annual recoverable costs of the tilefish IFQ program.* The Regional Administrator shall determine the costs associated with the management, data collection and analysis, and enforcement of the IFQ allocation program. The recoverable costs will be divided by the amount of the total ex-vessel value of all tilefish IFQ landings during the cost-recovery billing period to derive a percentage. IFQ Allocation permit holders will be assessed a fee based on this percentage times the total ex-vessel value of all landings authorized under their permanent IFQ Allocation permit, including landings on allocation that is leased. This fee shall not exceed 3 percent of the total value of tilefish landings of the IFQ Allocation permit holder. If NMFS determines that the costs associated with the management, data collection and analysis, and enforcement of the IFQ allocation program exceed 3 percent of the total value of tilefish landings, only 3 percent are recoverable. Prior to the first year of the IFQ program, NMFS will not have information needed to determine the management, data collection

and analysis, and enforcement costs of the program. Therefore, during the initial cost-recovery billing period, the fee shall be set at 3 percent. If the recoverable costs are determined to be less than 3 percent, NMFS shall issue each IFQ Allocation permit holder a fee-override credit, equal to the amount paid in excess of their portion of the recoverable cost, towards their subsequent year's fee.

(i) *Valuation of IFQ Allocation.* The 3-percent limitation on cost-recovery fees shall be based on the ex-vessel value of landed allocation. The ex-vessel value for each pound of tilefish landed shall be determined from Northeast Federal dealer reports submitted to NMFS, which contain the price per pound at the time of dealer purchase.

(ii) [Reserved]

(2) *Fee payment procedure.* An IFQ Allocation permit holder who has incurred a cost-recovery fee must pay the fee to NMFS within 45 days of the date of the bill. Cost-recovery payments shall be made electronically via the Federal Web portal, <http://www.pay.gov>, or other Internet sites designated by the Regional Administrator. Instructions for electronic payment shall be available on both the payment Web site and the cost-recovery fee bill. Electronic payment options shall include payment via a credit card, as specified in the cost-recovery bill, or via direct automated clearing house (ACH) withdrawal from a designated checking account. Alternatively, payment by check may be authorized by Regional Administrator if he/she determines that electronic payment is not possible.

(3) *Payment compliance.* If the cost-recovery payment, as determined by NMFS, is not made within the time specified in paragraph (h)(2) of this section, the Regional Administrator will deny the renewal of the appropriate IFQ Allocation permit until full payment is received. If, upon preliminary review of a fee payment, the Regional Administrator determines that the IFQ Allocation permit holder has not paid the full amount due, he/she shall notify the IFQ Allocation permit holder in writing of the deficiency. NMFS shall explain the deficiency and provide the IFQ Allocation permit holder 30 days

from the date of the notice, either to pay the amount assessed or to provide evidence that the amount paid was correct. If the IFQ Allocation permit holder submits evidence in support of the appropriateness of his/her payment, the Regional Administrator shall determine whether there is a reasonable basis upon which to conclude that the amount of the tendered payment is correct. This determination shall be in set forth in a Final Administrative Determination (FAD) that is signed by the Regional Administrator. A FAD shall be the final decision of the Department of Commerce. If the Regional Administrator determines that the IFQ Allocation permit holder has not paid the appropriate fee, he/she shall require payment within 30 days of the date of the FAD. If a FAD is not issued until after the start of the fishing year, the IFQ Allocation permit holder may be issued a letter of authorization to fish until the FAD is issued, at which point the permit holder shall have 30 days to comply with the terms of the FAD or the tilefish IFQ Allocation permit shall not be issued, and the letter of authorization shall not be valid until such terms are met. Any tilefish landed pursuant to the above authorization will count against the IFQ Allocation permit, if issued. If the Regional Administrator determines that the IFQ Allocation permit holder owes additional fees for the previous cost-recovery billing period, and the renewed IFQ Allocation permit has already been issued, the Regional Administrator shall issue a FAD and will notify the IFQ Allocation permit holder in writing. The IFQ Allocation permit holder shall have 30 days from the date of the FAD to comply with the terms of the FAD. If the IFQ Allocation permit holder does not comply with the terms of the FAD within this period, the Regional Administrator shall rescind the IFQ Allocation permit until such terms are met. If an appropriate payment is not received within 30 days of the date of a FAD, the Regional Administrator shall refer the matter to the appropriate authorities within the U.S. Department of the Treasury for purposes of collection. No permanent or temporary IFQ allocation transfers may be made to or from the allocation of an IFQ Allocation

permit holder who has not complied with any FAD. If the Regional Administrator determines that the terms of a FAD have been met, the IFQ Allocation permit holder may renew the tilefish IFQ Allocation permit. If NMFS does not receive full payment of a recoverable cost fee prior to the end of the cost-recovery billing period immediately following the one for which the fee was incurred, the subject IFQ Allocation permit shall be deemed to have been voluntarily relinquished pursuant to paragraph (b)(7) of this section.

(4) *Periodic review of the IFQ program.* A formal review of the IFQ program must be conducted by the Council within 5 years of the effective date of the final regulations. Thereafter, it shall be incorporated into every scheduled Council review of the FMP (i.e., future amendments or frameworks), but no less frequently than every 7 years.

[74 FR 42599, Aug. 24, 2009]

**§ 648.292 [Reserved]**

**§ 648.293 Tilefish trip limits.**

Any vessel of the United States fishing under a tilefish permit, as described at §648.4(a)(12), is prohibited from possessing more than 300 lb (138 kg) of tilefish at any time, unless the vessel is fishing under a tilefish IFQ Allocation permit, as specified at §648.291(a). Any tilefish landed by a vessel fishing under an IFQ Allocation permit, on a given fishing trip, count as landings under the IFQ Allocation permit.

[74 FR 42603, Aug. 24, 2009]

**§ 648.294 Framework specifications.**

(a) *Within-season management action.* The Council may, at any time, initiate action to add or adjust management measures if it finds that action is necessary to meet or be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Tilefish FMP.

(1) *Specific management measures.* The following specific management measures may be adjusted at any time through the framework process:

- (i) Minimum fish size;
- (ii) Minimum hook size;