

Donald M. Itzkoff,  
Deputy Administrator.  
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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 285

[Docket No. 960416112-6164-02; ID# 071996B]

RIN 0648-A129

#### Atlantic Tuna Fisheries; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Angling Category

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS closes the fishery for school Atlantic bluefin tuna (ABT) conducted by Angling category fishermen in the waters off Delaware and states south. Closure of this fishery is necessary because the annual quota of 65 metric tons (mt) of school ABT allocated for this subcategory in waters off Delaware and states south is projected to be attained by July 25, 1996. The intent of this action is to prevent overharvest of the quota established for this fishery.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** The closure is effective from 2330 hours local time July 25 through December 31, 1996.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Bill Hogarth, 301-713-2347.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Regulations promulgated under the authority of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*) regulating the harvest of ABT by persons and vessels subject to U.S. jurisdiction are found at 50 CFR part 285.

Section 285.22(d)(1) of the regulations provides for an annual quota of 65 mt of school ABT to be harvested from waters off Delaware and states south by individuals in the Angling category. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), is authorized under § 285.20(b)(1) to monitor the catch and landing statistics and, on the basis of those statistics, to project a date when the catch of ABT will equal any quota under § 285.22. The AA is further

authorized under § 285.20(b)(1) to prohibit fishing for, or retention of, Atlantic bluefin tuna by those fishing in the category subject to the quota when the catch of tuna equals the quota established under § 285.22. The AA has determined, based on the reported catch and estimated fishing effort, that the annual quota of school ABT for those fishing in waters off Delaware and states south will be attained by July 25, 1996. Fishing for, catching, possessing, or landing any school ABT in the closed area must cease at 2330 hours local time on July 25, 1996. In addition, landing any school ABT in or from the closed area is prohibited.

However, anglers may continue to tag and release fish less than 47 inches (119 cm) curved fork length under the NMFS tag-and-release program (50 CFR 285.27). The Angling category fishery for bluefin tuna in the large school and small medium classes (47 inches to less than 59 inches (119 cm to less than 150 cm), and 59 inches to less than 73 inches (150 cm to less than 185 cm) curved fork length, respectively) is regulated under a separate quota and is not affected by this closure. Anglers, therefore, may continue to fish for these larger size classes. The 73 metric ton quota of school ABT for the waters off New Jersey and states north is not affected by this closure, and remains open.

#### Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR 285.20(b)(1) and complies with E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*

Dated: July 19, 1996.

Richard H. Schaefer,  
Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 96-18851 Filed 7-19-96; 4:21 pm]

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#### 50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 960129018-6018-01; I.D. 071996A]

#### Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska; Northern Rockfish in the Central Gulf of Alaska

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for northern rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the northern rockfish total allowable catch (TAC) in this area.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), July 20, 1996, until 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 1996.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mary Furuness, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone is managed by NMFS according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and part 679.

The northern rockfish TAC for the Central Regulatory Area was established by the Final 1996 Harvest Specifications of Groundfish (61 FR 4304, February 5, 1996) as 4,610 metric tons (mt). (See § 679.20(c)(3)(ii).)

The Director, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Director), established a directed fishing allowance for northern rockfish of 4,360 mt, with consideration that 250 mt will be taken as incidental catch in directed fishing for other species in this area. (See § 679.20(d)(1).) The Regional Director has determined that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for northern rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area.

The maximum retainable bycatch amounts at § 679.20(e) apply to a fishery that is closed to directed fishing.

#### Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 679.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 19, 1996.

Richard W. Surdi,  
Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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