

medium and giant ABT to be harvested from the regulatory area by vessels fishing under the General category quota during the period beginning August 1 and ending August 31. Due to an underage of 7 mt in the June/July subquota, the August subquota was adjusted to 193 mt. Based on reported catch and effort, NMFS projects that this revised quota will be reached by August 17, 1996. Therefore, fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant ABT under the General category quota must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time August 17, 1996. The General category will reopen September 1, 1996 with a quota of 159 mt for the September period, plus any underage from the August period.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 285.20(b) and 50 CFR 285.22 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: August 15, 1996.

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

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50 CFR Part 678

[I.D. 072396A]

Atlantic Shark Fisheries; Large Coastal Sharks Closure

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

ACTION: Closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is closing the commercial fishery for large coastal

sharks conducted by vessels with a Federal Atlantic Shark permit in the Western North Atlantic Ocean, including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the semiannual quota for the period July 1 through December 31, 1996.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 2330 hours local time August 31, 1996, through December 31, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: C. Michael Bailey, 301-713-2347; Mark Murray-Brown, 508-281-9260; or John M. Ward, 813-570-5335.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Atlantic shark fishery is managed by NMFS according to the fishery management plan (FMP) for Atlantic Sharks under authority of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*). Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at 50 CFR part 678.

Section 678.24(b) of the regulations provides for two semiannual quotas of large coastal sharks to be harvested from Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico waters by commercial fishermen. The second semiannual quota is available for harvest from July 1 through December 31, 1996.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), is required under § 678.25 to monitor the catch and landing statistics and, on the basis of these statistics, to determine when the catch of Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico sharks will equal any quota under § 678.24(b). When shark harvests reach, or are projected to reach, a quota established under § 678.24(b), the AA is further required under § 678.25 to close the fishery.

The AA has determined, based on the reported catch and other relevant

factors, that the semiannual quota for the period July 1 through December 31, 1996, for large coastal sharks, in or from the Western North Atlantic Ocean, including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, will be attained by August 31, 1996. During this closure, for vessels issued a permit under § 678.4, retention of large coastal sharks from the management unit is prohibited, unless the vessel is operating as a charter vessel or headboat, in which case the vessel limit per trip is four large coastal sharks. In addition, the sale, purchase, trade, or barter or attempted sale, purchase, trade, or barter of carcasses and/or fins of large coastal sharks harvested by a person aboard any vessel that has been issued a permit under § 678.4, is prohibited, except for those that were harvested, off-loaded, and sold, traded, or bartered prior to August 31, 1996, and were held in storage by a dealer or processor.

Vessels that have been issued a Federal permit under § 678.4 are reminded that as a condition of permit issuance, the vessel may not retain a large coastal shark during the closure, except as provided by § 678.24(a)(2). Fishing for pelagic and small coastal sharks may continue. The recreational fishery is not affected by this closure.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR part 678 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: August 15, 1996.

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

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