

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

## 50 CFR Part 285

[I.D. 071097B]

## Atlantic Tuna Fisheries; Inseason Adjustment

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

**ACTION:** Catch limit adjustment.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS adjusts the daily catch limit for the Angling category fishery for Atlantic bluefin tuna (ABT) to four fish per vessel from the school size class and one fish per vessel from the large school or small medium size class. The duration of the catch limit adjustment is limited to August 7, 1997, whereupon the limit will revert to one ABT per vessel per day. This action is being taken to ensure reasonable fishing opportunities in all geographic areas without risking overharvest of this category.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** The daily catch limit adjustment is effective 1:00 a.m., local time, July 11, 1997, until 11:30 p.m., local time, August 7, 1997.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** John Kelly, 301-713-2347, or Mark Murray-Brown, 508-281-9260.

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

Implementing regulations for the Atlantic tuna fisheries at § 285.24 allow for adjustments to the daily catch limits in order to provide for maximum utilization of the quota spread over the longest possible period of time. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, may increase or reduce the per angler catch limit for any size class bluefin tuna or may change the per angler limit to a per boat limit or a per boat limit to a per angler limit.

ABT landings reported in the southern area (Delaware and states south) in January, February and March 1997, were primarily small medium bluefin tuna. Given the limited quota available for the ABT Angling category and the large size (100-200 lbs) of individual fish landed in the winter fishery, NMFS reduced the daily catch limit to one fish per vessel. NMFS took further action to close the winter ABT

fishery on March 2, 1997 to ensure that sufficient quota would remain for the summer ABT fisheries. On June 13, 1997, NMFS reopened the Angling category fishery but maintained the daily catch limit at one ABT per vessel to ensure that the southern area quota would not be exceeded.

Since the reopening, information collected by NMFS through dockside and telephone surveys indicates that the conservative catch limit of one fish per day has resulted in greatly reduced fishing pressure. Estimated landings for the month of June indicate that approximately 2.5 metric tons (mt) of school bluefin were landed in the southern area (quota of 51 mt) and approximately 2.6 mt of school bluefin were landed in the northern area (quota of 57 mt). No landings of large school or small medium ABT were reported during June. NMFS has determined that a catch limit adjustment is warranted to ensure reasonable fishing opportunities in all geographic areas without risking overharvest.

The daily catch limit is adjusted as follows: No more than four school bluefin tuna may be retained each day per Angling category vessel. In addition, one ABT per vessel may be landed from the large school or small medium size class. This catch limit adjustment is effective through August 7, 1997, whereupon the daily limit will revert to one ABT per day which may be from the school, large school or small medium size class.

Depending on the level of fishing effort and catch rates of ABT, NMFS may determine that an interim closure or additional catch limit adjustment is necessary to enhance scientific data collection from all geographic areas. Closures or subsequent adjustments to the daily catch limit, if any, shall be announced through publication in the **Federal Register**. In addition, anglers may call the Highly Migratory Species Information Line at 301-713-1279 or 508-281-9305 for updates on quota monitoring and catch limit adjustments. Anglers aboard Charter/Headboat and General category vessels, when engaged in recreational fishing for school, large school, and small medium ABT, are subject to the same rules as anglers aboard Angling category vessels.

**Classification**

This action is taken under 50 CFR 285.24(d)(3) and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: July, 10, 1997.

**Gary Matlock,**

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

## 50 CFR Part 300

[Docket No. 961217359-7050-02; I.D. 070397C]

## Pacific Halibut Fisheries; Oregon Sport Fishery

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

**ACTION:** Inseason action.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the Area 2A sport fishery off Oregon on August 1, 2, and 9, 1997, in all-depths is closed. The restricted depth fishery will remain open until September 30, 1997, or until the Oregon sport fishery quota is reached.

**DATES:** Effective July 16, 1997.

Comments will be accepted through July 31, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments may be mailed to William Stelle, Jr., Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, NMFS, 7600 Sand Point Way, Seattle, WA 98115. Information relevant to this action is available for public review during business hours at this address.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Joe Scordino, 206-526-6143.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Area 2A Catch Sharing Plan for Pacific halibut off Washington, Oregon, and California is implemented in the annual management measures for the Pacific halibut fisheries published on March 18, 1997 (62 FR 12759). The sport fishery in Oregon in the area from Cape Falcon, Oregon, to the Oregon/California border was divided in accordance with the Area 2A Catch Sharing Plan into three seasons with an overall quota of 137,600 lb (62.4 mt) for 1997. The first season in the area between Cape Falcon and the Siuslaw River, which was an all-depth fishery with a sub-quota of 86,703 lb (39.3 mt), closed on May 24. The first season in the area between the Siuslaw River and the Oregon/California border, which was an all-depth fishery with a sub-quota of 8,077 lb (3.7 mt), closed on May 17. The second season for both areas (from Cape Falcon to the Oregon/