

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 648**

[Docket No. 151130999–6225–01]

RIN 0648–XF035

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; Quota Transfer

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; approval of quota transfer.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces its approval of a transfer of 2016 commercial bluefish quota from the State of Maine to the State of Rhode Island. The approval of the transfer complies with the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provision. This announcement also informs the public of the revised commercial quotas for Maine and Rhode Island.

DATES: Effective November 21, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Reid Lichwell, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281–9112.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing the Atlantic bluefish fishery are found in 50 CFR 648.160 through 648.167. The regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from Maine through Florida. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state are described in § 648.162.

The final rule implementing Amendment 1 to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan was published in the *Federal Register* on July 26, 2000 (65 FR 45844), and provided a mechanism for transferring bluefish quota from one state to another. Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), can request approval of a transfer of bluefish commercial quota under § 648.162(e)(1)(i) through (iii). The Regional Administrator must first approve any such transfer based on the criteria in § 648.162(e).

Maine and Rhode Island have requested the transfer of 32,000 pounds (lb) (14,515 kilogram (kg)) of bluefish commercial quota from Maine to Rhode

Island. Both states have certified that the transfer meets all pertinent state requirements. This quota transfer was requested by Rhode Island to ensure that its 2016 quota would not be exceeded. The Regional Administrator has approved this quota transfer based on his determination that the criteria set forth in § 648.162(e)(1)(i) through (iii) have been met. The revised bluefish quotas for calendar year 2016 are: Maine, 655 lb (297 kg); and Rhode Island, 464,561 lb (210,721 kg). These quota adjustments revise the quotas specified in the final rule implementing the 2016–2018 Atlantic Bluefish Specifications published on August 4, 2016 (81 FR 51370), and reflect all subsequent commercial bluefish quota transfers completed to date. For information of previous transfers for fishing year 2016 visit: <http://go.usa.gov/xZT8H>.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: November 17, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2016–28089 Filed 11–21–16; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 665**

[Docket No. 151023986–6763–02]

RIN 0648–XE284

Pacific Island Pelagic Fisheries; 2016 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Bigeye Tuna Fishery; Closure

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is closing the U.S. pelagic longline fishery for bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean because the fishery will reach the 2016 allocation limit for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). This action is necessary to comply with regulations managing this fish stock.

DATES: Effective 12:01 a.m. local time December 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ariel Jacobs, NMFS PIRO Sustainable Fisheries, 808–725–5182.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On July 22, 2016, NMFS restricted the retention, transshipment and landing of bigeye tuna captured by longline gear in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) because the U.S. longline fishery reached 2016 U.S. bigeye tuna limit of 3,554 mt (81 FR 45982, July 15, 2016). Regulations at 50 CFR 300.224(d) provide an exception to this closure for bigeye tuna caught by U.S. longline vessels identified in a valid specified fishing agreement under 50 CFR 665.819(c). Further, 50 CFR 665.819(c)(9) authorized NMFS to attribute catches of bigeye tuna made by U.S. longline vessels identified in a valid specified fishing agreement to the U.S. territory to which the agreement applies.

Effective on September 9, 2016, NMFS specified a 2016 catch limit of 2,000 mt of longline-caught bigeye tuna for the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or CNMI (81 FR 63145, September 14, 2016). NMFS also authorized each territory to allocate up to 1,000 mt of its 2,000 mt bigeye tuna limit to U.S. longline fishing vessels permitted to fish under the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific (FEP).

On September 9, 2016, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, through its Executive Director, transmitted to NMFS a specified fishing agreement between the CNMI and Quota Management, Inc. (QMI) dated April 14, 2016. NMFS reviewed the agreement and determined that it was consistent with the requirements at 50 CFR 665.819, the FEP, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and other applicable laws (81 FR 64356, September 20, 2016). The criteria that a specified fishing agreement must meet, and the process for attributing longline-caught bigeye tuna, followed the procedures in 50 CFR 665.819—Territorial catch and fishing effort limits.

In accordance with 50 CFR 300.224(d) and 50 CFR 665.819(c)(9), NMFS began attributing bigeye tuna caught in the WCPO by vessels identified in the CNMI/QMI agreement to the CNMI, beginning on September 9, 2016. NMFS monitored catches of longline-caught bigeye tuna by the CNMI longline fisheries, including catches made by U.S. longline vessels operating under the CNMI/QMI agreement. Based on this monitoring, NMFS forecasted that the

CNMI territorial allocation limit of 1,000 mt will be reached by December 1, 2016, and is, as an accountability measure, prohibiting the catch and retention of longline-caught bigeye tuna by vessels in the CNMI/QMI agreement.

Notice of Closure and Temporary Rule

Effective 12:01 a.m. local time December 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016, NMFS closes the U.S. pelagic longline fishery for bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean as a result of the fishery reaching the 2016 allocation limit of 1,000 mt for the CNMI.

During the closure, a U.S. fishing vessel operating under the CNMI/QMI agreement may not retain on board, transship, or land bigeye tuna captured by longline gear in the WCPO, except that any bigeye tuna already on board a fishing vessel upon the effective date of the restrictions may be retained on board, transshipped, and landed, provided that they are landed within 14 days of the start of the closure; that is, by December 15, 2016. Additionally, U.S. fishing vessels operating under the CNMI/QMI agreement are also prohibited from transshipping bigeye tuna caught in the WCPO by longline gear to any vessel other than a U.S. fishing vessel with a valid permit issued under 50 CFR 660.707 or 665.801.

During the closure, all other restrictions and requirements NMFS established on July 22, 2016, as a result of the U.S. longline fishery reaching the 2016 U.S. bigeye tuna limit of 3,554 mt (81 FR 45982, July 15, 2016) shall remain valid and effective.

If, prior to December 1, 2016, NMFS receives a valid specified fishing agreement between a U.S. longline fishing vessel(s) and another U.S. territory, any vessel included in the CNMI/QMI agreement that is also included in the subsequent agreement may continue to transship, retain, and land bigeye tuna caught by longline gear in the WCPO. Additionally, if any such vessel is engaged in a longline fishing trip in the WCPO on December 1, 2016, that vessel would not need to return to port before December 15, 2016. NMFS would announce any valid specified fishing agreement in the **Federal Register**.

Classification

There is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment on this action, because it would be impracticable and contrary to public interest, as discussed below. This rule closes the U.S. longline fishery for bigeye tuna in the WCPO as a result of

reaching the bigeye tuna allocation limit established by the 2016 specification for catch and allocation limits of bigeye tuna for the CNMI, and the specified fishing agreement between the Government of the CNMI and QMI dated April 14, 2016.

NMFS forecasted that the fishery would reach the 2016 CNMI allocation limit by December 1, 2016. Fishermen have been subject to longline bigeye tuna limits in the western and central Pacific since 2009. They have received ongoing, updated information about the 2016 catch and progress of the fishery in reaching the U.S. bigeye tuna limit via the NMFS Web site, social media, and other means. The publication timing of this rule, moreover, provides longline fishermen with seven days' advance notice of the closure date, and allows two weeks to return to port and land their catch of bigeye tuna. This action is intended to comply with regulations managing this stock, and, accordingly NMFS finds it impracticable and contrary to the public interest to have prior notice and public comment.

For the reasons stated above, there is also good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness for this temporary rule. NMFS must close the fishery to ensure that fishery does not exceed the allocation limit. NMFS implemented the catch and allocation limits for the CNMI consistent with management objectives to sustainably manage the bigeye tuna stock and restore the stock to levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield on a continuing basis. Failure to close the fishery before the limit is reached would be inconsistent with bigeye tuna management objections and in violation of Federal law.

This action is required by 50 CFR 665.819(d), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: November 17, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

[FR Doc. 2016-28061 Filed 11-17-16; 11:15 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 150818742-6210-02]

RIN 0648-XE958

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Inseason Adjustment to the 2016 Gulf of Alaska Pollock Seasonal Apportionments

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; inseason adjustment.

SUMMARY: NMFS is adjusting the 2016 D seasonal apportionments of the total allowable catch (TAC) for pollock in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) by re-apportioning unharvested pollock TAC in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630 of the GOA. This action is necessary to provide opportunity for harvest of the 2016 pollock TAC, consistent with the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), November 17, 2016, until 2400 hours A.l.t., December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The annual pollock TACs in Statistical Areas 610, 620, and 630 of the GOA are apportioned among four seasons, in accordance with § 679.23(d)(2). Regulations at § 679.20(a)(5)(iv)(B) allow the underharvest of a seasonal apportionment to be added to subsequent seasonal apportionments, provided that any revised seasonal apportionment does not exceed 20 percent of the seasonal apportionment for a given statistical area. Therefore, NMFS is increasing the D season