

procedures and criteria, the state of Georgia has determined that unusually cold temperatures have occurred and that state water temperatures have been 9 °C (48 °F), or less, for at least 7 consecutive days and that these cold weather conditions pose a risk to the condition and vulnerability of overwintering white shrimp populations in its state waters. Georgia closed its waters on January 15, 2018, to the harvest of brown, pink, and white shrimp, and has requested that NMFS implement a concurrent closure of the EEZ off Georgia. In accordance with the procedures described in the FMP, the state of Georgia submitted a letter to the NMFS Regional Administrator (RA) on January 17, 2018, requesting that NMFS close the EEZ adjacent to Georgia to penaeid shrimp harvest as a result of severe cold weather conditions.

NMFS has determined that the recommended Federal closure conforms with the procedures and criteria specified in the FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and, therefore, implements the Federal closure effective January 24, 2018. The closure will be effective until the ending date of the closure in Georgia state waters, but may be ended earlier based on a request from the state. NMFS will terminate the closure of the EEZ by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register.

During the closure, as specified in 50 CFR 622.206(a)(2), no person may: (1) Trawl for brown, pink, or white shrimp in the EEZ off Georgia; (2) possess on board a fishing vessel brown, pink, or white shrimp in or from the EEZ off Georgia unless the vessel is in transit through the area and all nets with a mesh size of less than 4 inches (10.2 cm), as measured between the centers of opposite knots when pulled taut, are stowed below deck; or (3) for a vessel trawling within 25 nautical miles of the baseline from which the territorial sea is measured, use or have on board a trawl net with a mesh size less than 4 inches (10.2 cm), as measured between the centers of opposite knots when pulled taut.

#### Classification

The Regional Administrator for the NMFS Southeast Region has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of the spawning stock of white shrimp off Georgia and is consistent with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.206(a) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility

Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the EEZ off Georgia to trawling for penaeid shrimp constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such procedures would be unnecessary because the rule itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure.

Providing prior notice and opportunity for public comment also is contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect the spawning stock of white shrimp off Georgia. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially further harm the spawning stock that has been impacted due to cold weather.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

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

Dated: January 22, 2018.

**Samuel D. Rauch III,**  
*Deputy Assistant Administrator for  
Regulatory Programs, National Marine  
Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 161017970–6999–02]

RIN 0648–XF937

#### Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Quota Transfers

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; quota transfers.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces two retroactive commercial summer flounder quota transfers for the 2017 fishing year. The State of New York is transferring a portion of its quota to the

State of New Jersey, and the State of North Carolina is transferring quota to the Commonwealth of Virginia. These quota adjustments are necessary to comply with the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provisions. This announcement informs the public of the revised 2017 commercial quotas for New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia.

**DATES:** Effective January 24, 2018, through December 31, 2018.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Cynthia Hanson, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281–9180.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery are found in 50 CFR 648.100 through 648.110. These regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from Maine through North Carolina. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state is described in § 648.102, and the initial 2017 allocations were published on December 22, 2016 (81 FR 93842).

The final rule implementing Amendment 5 to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan, as published in the **Federal Register** on December 17, 1993 (58 FR 65936), provided a mechanism for transferring summer flounder commercial quota from one state to another. Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator, can transfer or combine summer flounder commercial quota under § 648.102(c)(2). The Regional Administrator is required to consider the criteria in § 648.102(c)(2)(i)(A) through (C) in the evaluation of requests for quota transfers or combinations.

This action includes two transfers of fishing year 2017 summer flounder commercial quota: New York is transferring 384 lb (174 kg) of quota to New Jersey; North Carolina is transferring 11,902 lb (5,399 kg) of quota to Virginia. Both of these transfers were requested to repay landings made in the receiving states under a safe harbor agreement. The revised summer flounder quotas for calendar year 2017 are now: New York, 435,380 lb (197,485 kg); New Jersey, 946,516 lb (429,332 kg); North Carolina, 1,524,791 lb (691,634 kg); and Virginia, 1,228,191 lb (557,098 kg); based on the initial quotas published in the 2017 Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Specifications and subsequent transfers.

The 2017 fishing year ended December 31, 2017. The revised 2017

quotas will be used by NMFS in the ongoing quota accounting that is finalized in late 2018. These transfers were requested as a result of unforeseeable late-season events. Specifically, two landing events where

vessels were granted safe harbor too late in the year to publish notice in 2017.

**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: January 19, 2018.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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