

(GA/NC) hogfish stock, with a southern boundary extending east from the Florida/Georgia state border to the North Carolina and Virginia state border. The other stock is the FLK/EFL hogfish stock. The FLK/EFL hogfish stock boundary extends from the 25°09' N latitude line off the west coast of Florida (near Cape Sable, Florida), east around South Florida, to the Florida/Georgia border. The final rule for Amendment 37 set the 2018 ACL for the commercial sector of the FLK/EFL hogfish stock at 4,524 lb (2,052 kg), round weight.

In accordance with regulations at 50 CFR 622.193(u)(2)(i), the commercial AMs for the FLK/EFL hogfish stock include an in-season closure if the commercial ACL is met or is projected to be met. NMFS is required to close the commercial sector for hogfish when the ACL has been met, or is projected to be met, by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register.

NMFS has determined that the 2018 commercial ACL for the EFL/FLK hogfish stock established by Amendment 37 will be met on November 16, 2018. Therefore, this temporary rule implements the AM to close the commercial sector for EFL/FLK hogfish stock in the South Atlantic for the remainder of the 2018 fishing year. Accordingly, the commercial sector for the EFL/FLK hogfish stock in the South Atlantic EEZ will be closed effective 12:01 a.m. local time, November 16, 2018, until January 1, 2019, the start of the next fishing year.

During the commercial closure, all sale or purchase of hogfish in or from the EEZ off the Florida Keys and east coast of Florida, and south of 25°09' N lat. off the west coast of Florida is prohibited, and harvest or possession of this species is limited to the bag and possession limits. These bag and possession limits apply for this hogfish stock on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters. The commercial sector for the EFL/FLK hogfish stock in the South Atlantic EEZ will reopen on January 1, 2019.

Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of hogfish in the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(u)(2)(i) 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 public comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries (AA) finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the commercial sector for this stock constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment on this temporary rule pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), because such procedures are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the AMs established by Amendment 37 (82 FR 34584; July 25, 2017) and located at 50 CFR 622.193(u)(2)(i) have already been subject to notice and public comment. All that remains is to notify the public of the commercial closure for the EFL/FLK hogfish stock in the South Atlantic EEZ for the remainder of the 2018 fishing year. Such procedures are contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect the EFL/FLK hogfish stock, since time for notice and public comment will allow for continued commercial harvest and further exceedance of the commercial ACLs.

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

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

Dated: November 9, 2018.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2018-24915 Filed 11-9-18; 4:15 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 635

[Docket No. 180117042-8884-02]

RIN 0648-XG624

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fisheries

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; General category October–November fishery for 2018; fishery reopening.

SUMMARY: NMFS has determined that a reopening of the Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) General category fishery is warranted. This action is intended to provide a reasonable opportunity to harvest the full annual U.S. BFT quota without exceeding it, while maintaining an equitable distribution of fishing opportunities across time periods; help achieve optimum yield in the BFT fishery; and optimize the ability of all permit categories to harvest their full BFT quota allocations. This action applies to Atlantic tunas General category (commercial) permitted vessels and Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Charter/Headboat category permitted vessels with a commercial sale endorsement when fishing commercially for BFT.

DATES: Effective 12:30 a.m., local time, November 12, 2018, through 11:30 p.m., local time, November 16, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Uriah Forest-Bulley, 978-675-2154, or Larry Redd, 301-427-8503.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations implemented under the authority of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA; 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*) and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act; 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) governing the harvest of BFT by persons and vessels subject to U.S. jurisdiction are found at 50 CFR part 635. Section 635.27 subdivides the U.S. BFT quota recommended by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and as implemented by the United States among the various domestic fishing categories, per the allocations established in the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (2006 Consolidated HMS FMP) (71 FR 58058, October 2, 2006), as amended by Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP (Amendment 7) (79 FR 71510, December 2, 2014). NMFS is required under ATCA and the Magnuson-Stevens Act to provide U.S. fishing vessels with a reasonable opportunity to harvest the ICCAT-recommended quota.

NMFS recently published a final rule (*i.e.*, the “quota rule” (83 FR 51391, October 11, 2018)) that increased the baseline U.S. BFT quota from 1,058.79 mt to 1,247.86 mt and accordingly increased the subquotas for 2018, including an increase in the General category October through November period subquota from 60.7 mt to 70.2

mt, consistent with the annual BFT quota calculation process. On October 4, 2018, NMFS transferred 55 mt to the General category and closed the General category fishery effective October 5, 2018, based on projections that landings would meet or exceed the adjusted October through November subquota of 127.2 mt by that date (83 FR 50857, October 10, 2018). Since October 5, 2018, NMFS has reopened the October through November subquota period two separate times for multiple days in an attempt to allow the available quota to be harvested (83 FR 52169, October 16, 2018, and 83 FR 55108, November 2, 2018).

General Category Reopening

As of November 6, 2018, reports show that the October through November landings are still less than the available subquota of 127.2 mt. Based on landings rates, NMFS has determined that reopening the General category fishery for five days is appropriate.

Therefore, the General category fishery will reopen at 12:30 a.m., November 12, 2018, and close at 11:30 p.m., November 16, 2018. The General category daily retention limit during this reopening is one large medium or giant BFT per vessel per day/trip. This action applies to those vessels permitted in the General category, as well as to those HMS Charter/Headboat permitted vessels with a commercial sale endorsement when fishing commercially for BFT. Retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant BFT by persons aboard vessels permitted in the General and HMS Charter/Headboat categories must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time on November 16, 2018.

The General category will reopen automatically on December 1, 2018, for the December 2018 subquota period at the default retention limit of one fish. In December 2017, NMFS adjusted the General category base subquota for the December 2018 period to 10 mt (82 FR 60680, December 22, 2017), although this amount increased to 14.6 mt with finalization of the quota rule. Based on quota availability in the Reserve, NMFS may consider transferring additional quota to the December subquota period, as appropriate.

Fishermen may catch and release (or tag and release) BFT of all sizes, subject to the requirements of the catch-and-release and tag-and-release programs at § 635.26. All BFT that are released must be handled in a manner that will maximize their survival, and without removing the fish from the water, consistent with requirements at § 635.21(a)(1). For additional

information on safe handling, see the “Careful Catch and Release” brochure available at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/.

Monitoring and Reporting

NMFS will continue to monitor the BFT fishery closely. Dealers are required to submit landing reports within 24 hours of a dealer receiving BFT. Late reporting by dealers compromises NMFS’ ability to timely implement actions such as quota and retention limit adjustment, as well as closures, and may result in enforcement actions. Additionally, and separate from the dealer reporting requirement, General and HMS Charter/Headboat category vessel owners are required to report the catch of all BFT retained or discarded dead within 24 hours of the landing(s) or end of each trip, by accessing hmspermits.noaa.gov, using the HMS Catch Reporting app, or calling (888) 872-8862 (Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.).

Depending on the level of fishing effort and catch rates of BFT, NMFS may determine that additional adjustments are necessary to ensure available subquotas are not exceeded or to enhance scientific data collection from, and fishing opportunities in, all geographic areas. If needed, subsequent adjustments will be published in the **Federal Register**. In addition, fishermen may call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (978) 281-9260, or access hmspermits.noaa.gov, for updates on quota monitoring and inseason adjustments.

Classification

The Assistant Administrator for NMFS (AA) finds that it is impracticable and contrary to the public interest to provide prior notice of, and an opportunity for public comment on, this action for the following reasons:

The regulations implementing the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and amendments provide for inseason actions to respond to the unpredictable nature of BFT availability on the fishing grounds, the migratory nature of this species, and the regional variations in the BFT fishery. Affording prior notice and opportunity for public comment to implement the fishery reopening is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. The General category recently closed, but based on available BFT quotas, recent fishery performance, and the availability of BFT on the fishing grounds, responsive reopening of the fishery is warranted to allow fishermen to take advantage of availability of fish and of quota. NMFS could not have proposed this action earlier, as it needed

to consider and respond to updated data and information about fishery conditions and this year’s landings. If NMFS was to offer a public comment period now, after having appropriately considered that data, it would preclude fishermen from harvesting BFT that are legally available. Therefore, the AA finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment. For all of the above reasons, there also is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

This action is being taken under § 635.27(a)(1), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: November 9, 2018.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2018-24954 Filed 11-9-18; 4:15 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 170816769-8162-02]

RIN 0648-XG625

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Shortraker Rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of shortraker rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary because the 2018 total allowable catch of shortraker rockfish in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will be reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), November 9, 2018, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Obren Davis, 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