

with the Commission pursuant to § 64.2115.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 635

[Docket No. 180117042-8884-02]

RIN 0648-XG950

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fisheries

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

ACTION: Temporary rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS closes the Gulf of Mexico Angling category incidental fishery for large medium and giant (“trophy” (*i.e.*, measuring 73 inches curved fork length or greater)) Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT). This action is being taken to prevent overharvest of the Angling category Gulf of Mexico trophy BFT subquota.

DATES: Effective 11:30 p.m., local time, May 31, 2019 through December 31, 2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sarah McLaughlin, 978-281-9260 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) among the various domestic fishing categories, per the allocations established in the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (2006 Consolidated HMS FMP) (71 FR 58058, October 2, 2006) and amendments.

NMFS is required, under § 635.28(a)(1), to file a closure notice with the Office of the Federal Register for publication when a BFT quota is reached or is projected to be reached. On and after the effective date and time of such notification, for the remainder of

the fishing year or for a specified period as indicated in the notification, retaining, possessing, or landing BFT under that quota category is prohibited until the opening of the subsequent quota period or until such date as specified in the notice.

Angling Category Large Medium and Giant Gulf of Mexico “Trophy” Fishery Closure

The 2019 BFT fishing year, which is managed on a calendar-year basis and subject to an annual calendar-year quota, began January 1, 2019. The Angling category season opened January 1, 2019, and continues through December 31, 2019. The currently codified Angling category quota is 232.4 metric tons (mt), of which 5.3 mt is allocated for the harvest of large medium and giant (trophy) BFT by vessels fishing under the Angling category quota, with 1.8 mt allocated for each of the following areas: North of 39°18' N lat. (off Great Egg Inlet, NJ); south of 39°18' N lat. and outside the Gulf of Mexico (the “southern area”); and in the Gulf of Mexico. Trophy BFT measure 73 inches (185 cm) curved fork length or greater.

Based on reported landings from the NMFS Automated Catch Reporting System, NMFS has determined that the codified Angling category Gulf of Mexico trophy BFT subquota of 1.8 mt has been reached and that a closure of the Gulf of Mexico trophy BFT fishery is warranted. Therefore, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant BFT in the Gulf of Mexico by persons aboard vessels permitted in the HMS Angling category and the HMS Charter/Headboat category (when fishing recreationally) must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time on May 31, 2019. This closure will remain effective through December 31, 2019. This action is intended to prevent overharvest of the Angling category Gulf of Mexico trophy BFT subquota, and is taken consistent with the regulations at § 635.28(a)(1).

If needed, subsequent Angling category adjustments will be published in the **Federal Register**. Information regarding the Angling category fishery for Atlantic tunas, including daily retention limits for BFT measuring 27 inches (68.5 cm) to less than 73 inches and any further Angling category adjustments, is available at [hmspermits.noaa.gov](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov) or by calling (978) 281-9260. HMS Angling and HMS Charter/Headboat category permit holders 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. Anglers are also reminded that

all BFT that are released must be handled in a manner that will maximize 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 <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/outreach-and-education/careful-catch-and-release-brochure>.

HMS Charter/Headboat and Angling 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.).

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 retention limit adjustments and fishery closures 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. The closure of the Angling category Gulf of Mexico trophy fishery is necessary to prevent overharvest of the Gulf of Mexico trophy fishery subquota. NMFS provides notification of closures by publishing the notice in the **Federal Register**, emailing individuals who have subscribed to the Atlantic HMS News electronic newsletter, and updating the information posted on the Atlantic Tunas Information Line and on hmspermits.noaa.gov.

These fisheries are currently underway, and delaying this action would be contrary to the public interest as it could result in excessive trophy BFT landings that may result in future potential quota reductions for the Angling category, depending on the magnitude of a potential Angling category overharvest. NMFS must close the Gulf of Mexico trophy BFT fishery before additional landings of these sizes of BFT occur. 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 is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

This action is being taken under 50 CFR 635.28(a)(1), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: May 30, 2019.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

[FR Doc. 2019-11609 Filed 5-30-19; 4:15 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 180625576-8999-02]

RIN 0648-B194

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries Off West Coast States; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; 2019-2020 Biennial Specifications and Management Measures; Inseason Adjustments

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

ACTION: Final rule; inseason adjustments to biennial groundfish management measures.

SUMMARY: This final rule announces routine inseason adjustments to management measures in commercial and recreational groundfish fisheries. This action is intended to allow commercial and recreational fishing vessels to access more abundant groundfish stocks while protecting overfished and depleted stocks.

DATES: This final rule is effective June 4, 2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karen Palmigiano, phone: 206-526-4491 or email: karen.palmigiano@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

This rule is accessible via the internet at the Office of the Federal Register website at <https://www.federalregister.gov>. Background information and documents are available at the Pacific Fishery Management Council's website at <http://www.pcouncil.org/>.

Background

The Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (PCGFMP) and its

implementing regulations at title 50 in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 660, subparts C through G, regulate fishing for over 90 species of groundfish off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California. The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) develops groundfish harvest specifications and management measures for two-year periods (*i.e.*, a biennium). NMFS published the final rule to implement harvest specifications and management measures for the 2019-2020 biennium for most species managed under the PCGFMP on December 12, 2018 (83 FR 63970). In general, the management measures set at the start of the biennial specifications cycle help the various sectors of the fishery attain, but not exceed, the catch limits for each stock. The Council, in coordination with Pacific Coast Treaty Indian Tribes and the States of Washington, Oregon, and California, recommends adjustments to the management measures during the fishing year to achieve this goal.

At its March 6-12, and April 10-16, 2019, meetings, the Council recommended seven adjustments to the 2019-2020 PCGFMP management measures, including: (1) Increasing the limited entry fixed gear (LEFG) and open access (OA) trip limits for the Minor Nearshore Rockfish complex from 42° North Latitude (N lat.) to 40°10' N lat.; (2) increasing the LEFG and OA trip limits for the deeper nearshore rockfish complex south of 40°10' N lat.; (3) increasing the LEFG and OA trip limits for blackgill rockfish south of 40°10' N lat.; (4) increasing the LEFG and OA trip limits and recreational bag limit for lingcod south of 40°10' N lat.; (5) increasing the California recreational canary rockfish bag limit; (6) increasing the California recreational black rockfish bag limit, and (7) transferring lingcod south of 40°10' N lat. from the research and incidental open access (IOA) set-asides to the set asides for exempted fishing permits (EFPs).

Pacific Coast groundfish fisheries are managed using harvest specifications developed biennially and based on the best scientific information available at that time. Through the harvest specifications, the Council specifies annual catch limits (ACLs). Every species will either have its own designated ACL or be included in a multi-species ACL. Deductions from the ACL are then made to account for research, Pacific Coast treaty Indian tribal fisheries, scientific research, incidental open access (IOA) fisheries, and exempted fishing permits, resulting in the fishery harvest guideline. The

fishery harvest guideline for most species is then allocated between the trawl and non-trawl fisheries based on percentages adopted under Amendment 21 to the PCGFMP (*i.e.*, lingcod), or decided through the biennial specifications process (*i.e.*, canary rockfish). Some species' harvest guidelines are not allocated between the trawl and non-trawl fisheries because historically there has been low attainment (*i.e.*, Minor Nearshore Rockfish) or the species is allocated to a specific state (*i.e.*, California black rockfish) and catch is controlled through state management measures. Each of the adjustments to management measures discussed below are based on updated fisheries information through the 2018 fishing year that was unavailable when the original analysis was completed.

Minor Nearshore Rockfish Complex North of 40°10' N Lat.

The Minor Nearshore Rockfish complex north of 40°10' N lat. includes 13 species of rockfish. The ACLs for the Minor Nearshore Rockfish complex north of 40°10' N lat. are 81 mt in 2019 and 82 mt in 2020 with a 79 mt fishery harvest guideline in both years. Unlike other species, the coastwide harvest guideline is not allocated between trawl and non-trawl sectors because the trawl impacts are so minor. Instead, Washington, Oregon, and California have a sharing agreement and divide the federal harvest guideline for each of the species in the complex into state landing targets. The States then divide their shares between their commercial fixed gear and recreational sectors. Using the harvest guidelines along with catch information, the Council designates management measures to maximize catch within these state target limits while also limiting impacts to co-occurring rebuilding species such as yelloweye rockfish.

Most vessels fishing in California's nearshore fishery do not hold a federal limited entry permit and are considered federal OA fixed gear vessels. California restricts participation in the nearshore fishery by requiring a state limited entry permit to harvest nearshore groundfish species. Trip limits for these fisheries are designed to keep catch within nearshore species state and federal limits while providing a year-round fishing opportunity, if possible. The total California share of the coastwide harvest guideline the Minor Nearshore Rockfish complex is 36.6 mt for 2019 and 37.9 mt for 2020.

When the Council developed the 2019 and 2020 management measures for California's Minor Nearshore Rockfish