

(B) Charter halibut stamps may only be used for charter halibut permits in a given NMFS-approved account and may not be transferred between approved accounts.

(iv) *Rollover.* A charter halibut stamp that has been purchased and has not received charter halibut permit validation does not expire. Such charter halibut stamps may be validated in a future fishing year.

(v) *Charter halibut stamp validation reconciliation.* If, by 2400 A.l.t. on December 31 of a given fishing year, a charter halibut permit holder, for one or more associated charter halibut permits in a NMFS-approved account, has not purchased a number of charter halibut stamps equal to or greater than the number of charter halibut stamps validated under that account for that same fishing year, the Regional Administrator will send a reconciliation notice to the charter halibut permit holder. The reconciliation notice will state the validated charter halibut stamp deficit, as determined by the number of charter halibut stamps validated for that fishing year in excess of the number of charter halibut stamps that have been purchased. A charter halibut permit holder has 30 days from the date of the notice to either purchase the outstanding number of validated stamps or demonstrate how the reconciliation determination is in error.

(vi) *Validated Charter halibut stamp deficit.* If a charter halibut permit holder does not purchase the outstanding number of validated charter halibut stamps or demonstrate how the reconciliation determination described in paragraph (a)(1)(v) of this section is erroneous within 30 days as outlined in this paragraph (a)(1)(vi) of this section, the Regional Administrator may:

(A) Issue an Initial Administrative Determination (IAD) upholding the reconciliation determination;

(B) Disapprove any application to transfer the charter halibut permit, associated charter halibut permits in a NMFS-approved account, GAF, IFQ, or QS to or from the charter halibut permit holder until the outstanding validated charter halibut stamps are purchased, except that NMFS may return unused GAF to the IFQ holder's account from which it was derived on or after the automatic GAF return date;

(C) Disapprove the annual registration application of the charter halibut permit, and all associated charter halibut permits in a NMFS-approved account, in accordance with 50 CFR 300.67(a) of this title, until the outstanding validated charter halibut stamps are purchased; and

(D) Invalidate the community charter halibut permit or military charter halibut permit until the outstanding validated charter halibut stamps associated with that permit are purchased.

(vii) *Appeals.* A charter halibut permit holder who receives an IAD for a validated charter halibut stamp deficit may appeal the IAD pursuant to 15 CFR part 906.

(2) [Reserved]

(b) *Fee amount.* (1) The fee for a charter halibut stamp is \$20.

(2) The RQE may petition NMFS to increase or decrease the fee for a charter halibut stamp beginning on January 1, 2028. The fee for the charter halibut stamp may not increase by an amount more than 10 percent of the fee in the previous fishing year.

(3) The RQE may petition NMFS to suspend the fee at any time.

(c) *Fee payment to NMFS—(1) Obtaining charter halibut stamps.* Charter halibut permit holders must obtain charter halibut stamps from NMFS and pay applicable fees as specified at paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(2) *Charter vessel guide responsibilities.* Before each charter vessel fishing trip begins, the charter vessel guide is responsible for charter halibut stamp validation for each charter vessel angler as specified at paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(3) *Timing of charter halibut stamp reconciliation.* Charter halibut stamp reconciliation must occur as specified at paragraph (a)(1)(v) of this section.

(d) *RQE fee collection suspension.* The Regional Administrator may suspend the RQE fee collection indefinitely, or until such a time that any identified RQE operational deficiencies are corrected, if:

(1) Through the issuance of an IAD and the opportunity to appeal the IAD under 15 CFR part 906, the Regional Administrator determines that the RQE is out of compliance with regulations in this title, the RQE's own by-laws, or other applicable law;

(2) The Regional Administrator approves a petition by the RQE to suspend the RQE fee collection; or

(3) Congress no longer provides authorization for the Secretary of Commerce to collect and spend fees.

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 635

[Docket No. 220919-0193; RTID 0648-XE987]

### Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fisheries; Closure of the Harpoon Category Fishery for 2025

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS closes the Harpoon category fishery for large medium and giant (*i.e.*, measuring 73 inches (185 cm) curved fork length (CFL) or greater) Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) for the remainder of the 2025 fishing year. This closure applies to Atlantic Tunas Harpoon category permitted vessels.

**DATES:** Effective 11:30 a.m., local time, July 2, 2025, through December 31, 2025.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Atlantic BFT fisheries are managed under the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP) and its amendments, pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act; 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) and consistent with the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA; 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*). ATCA is the implementing statute for binding recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The HMS FMP and its amendments are implemented by regulations at 50 CFR part 635. Section 635.27(a) divides the U.S. BFT quota, established by ICCAT and as implemented by the United States among the various domestic fishing categories, per the allocations established in the HMS FMP and its amendments. NMFS is required under the Magnuson-Stevens Act at 16 U.S.C. 1854(g)(1)(D) to provide U.S. fishing vessels with a reasonable opportunity to harvest quotas under relevant international fishery agreements such as the ICCAT Convention, which is implemented domestically pursuant to ATCA.

Under § 635.28(a)(1), NMFS files a closure notice with the Office of the

Federal Register for publication when a BFT quota (or subquota) is reached or is projected to be reached. Retaining, possessing, or landing BFT under that quota category is prohibited on and after the effective date and time of a closure notice for that category, for the remainder of the fishing year, until the opening of the subsequent quota period or until such date as specified.

As described in § 635.27(a), the current baseline U.S. BFT quota is 1,316.14 metric tons (mt) (not including the 25 mt ICCAT allocated to the United States to account for bycatch of BFT in pelagic longline fisheries in the Northeast Distant Gear Restricted Area per § 635.27(a)(3)). The Harpoon category baseline quota is 59.2 mt. As described under § 635.27(a)(4), the Harpoon category quota is only available between June 1 and November 15 of each year.

#### **Closure of the 2025 BFT Harpoon Category Fishery**

To date, reported landings for the Harpoon category total approximately 55.7 mt. As described above, the baseline quota is 59.2 mt. However, landings estimates from 2024 indicate that the Harpoon, Angling, and General category quotas were exceeded. Thus, under § 635.27(a)(9) and consistent with ICCAT requirements, in order to ensure the overall U.S. quota is not exceeded, NMFS expects to take action later this year to reduce the various category quotas consistent with the estimated overharvest. While that action is not yet final, NMFS must still consider the implications of reduced quotas for various categories, including the Harpoon category. If both the 2024 and 2025 U.S. adjusted quotas are exceeded, under ICCAT requirements, the United States could be required to pay back 125 percent of the second year's (2025) overharvest in 2026. Based on that consideration and the current landings data, as well as average catch rates and anticipated fishing conditions, NMFS has determined that the Harpoon category quota is projected to be reached shortly, and that the Harpoon category should be closed. Therefore, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or

giant (*i.e.*, measuring 73 inches (185 cm) CFL or greater) BFT by persons aboard vessels permitted in the Harpoon category must cease at 11:30 a.m. local time on July 2, 2025. Should NMFS determine that reasonable fishing opportunities are available at a later date, NMFS may reopen the fishery. At this time, NMFS is closing the Harpoon category BFT fishery for the remainder of the Harpoon category season, which ends November 15, 2025, and thus for the year. The Harpoon category will reopen automatically on June 1, 2026, for the 2026 fishing year. This action applies to Atlantic Tunas Harpoon category (commercial) permitted vessels, and is taken consistent with the regulations at § 635.28(a)(1).

#### **Monitoring and Reporting**

NMFS will continue to monitor the BFT fisheries closely. Per § 635.5(b)(2)(i)(A), 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 adjustments, as well as closures, and may result in enforcement actions. Additionally, and separate from the dealer-reporting requirement, Harpoon category vessel owners are required per § 635.5(a)(4) to report their own catch of all BFT retained or discarded dead within 24 hours of the landing(s) or end of each trip, by accessing <https://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. Eastern Time).

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 access <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov>, for updates on quota monitoring and inseason adjustments.

#### **Classification**

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1855(d)) and regulations at 50 CFR part 635 and this action is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

The Assistant Administrator for NMFS (AA) finds that pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice of, and an opportunity for public comment on, this action because it is impracticable and contrary to the public interest for the following reasons. Specifically, the regulations implementing the HMS FMP and its 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. Providing for prior notice and opportunity to comment is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as this fishery is currently underway and, based on the most recent landings information, the 2025 quota for the Harpoon category is projected to be reached shortly. Delaying this action could result in BFT landings which would exceed the final 2025 Harpoon category quota, which may result in future potential quota reductions for other BFT categories or the 2026 Harpoon category quota, depending on the magnitude of a potential Harpoon category overharvest. NMFS notes that the public had an opportunity to comment on the underlying rulemakings that established the U.S. BFT quota and the inseason adjustment and closure criteria.

For all of the above reasons, the AA also finds that pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d), there is good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

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

Dated: July 2, 2025.

**Kelly Denit,**

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

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