UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

NMFS Proposes 2011 Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (BFT) Quotas and Atlantic Tuna Fisheries Management Measures

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces a proposed rule that would:

(1) implement and allocate the U.S. BFT quota recommended by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for 2011 and 2012;

(2) adjust the 2011 U.S. BFT quota and subquotas to account for BFT dead discards and unharvested 2010 quota allowed by ICCAT to be carried forward to 2011 (i.e., establish the 2011 BFT quota specifications);

(3) reinstate pelagic longline target catch requirements for retaining BFT in the Northeast Distant Gear Restricted Area (NED);

(4) amend the Atlantic tunas possession at sea and landing regulations to allow removal of tail lobes; and

(5) clarify the transfer at sea regulations for Atlantic tunas.

These actions are proposed in accordance with the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (Consolidated HMS FMP) and are necessary to implement ICCAT recommendations, as required by the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act, and to achieve domestic management objectives under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

For the United States, the 2010 ICCAT-recommended quota reduction results in a decrease from 977.4 mt in 2010 to 948.7 mt annually for 2011 and 2012. NMFS proposes to carry forward the full amount of BFT underharvest allowed by ICCAT to be carried from 2010 to 2011 (94.9 mt). After subtracting the dead discard estimate of 160 mt, NMFS would distribute the remainder of the available quota for 2011 consistent with the allocation scheme established in the Consolidated HMS FMP.

In 2003, NMFS modified the target catch requirements that were in effect in the NED to apply only once the 25-mt NED quota is attained. This change was made in connection with a research experiment conducted in the NED (a closed area at the time) to reduce sea turtle bycatch and bycatch mortality in the pelagic longline fishery. However, after the research experiment was completed and the NED reopened, NMFS did not reinstate the target catch requirements. Reinstating pelagic longline target catch requirements for retaining BFT in the NED would result in uniform target catch requirements for pelagic longline vessels operating in all areas. This action would help NMFS align BFT catch (landings and discards) with available quotas and would be consistent with ongoing agency efforts to address BFT bycatch, including the proposed weak hook requirement for pelagic longline vessels in the Gulf of Mexico.

See attached table for the proposed 2011 BFT quotas and quota specifications. To view the proposed rule and supporting documents, see www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/breaking_news.htm.

You may submit comments (identified by "0648-BA65") through April 14, 2011, by using any one of the following methods:

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- Submit electronic comments via the Federal eRulemaking Portal http://www.regulations.gov
- Fax: 978-281-9340, Attn: Sarah McLaughlin
- Mail: Sarah McLaughlin, Highly Migratory Species Management Division, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

To be considered, electronic comments must be submitted via the Federal eRulemaking Portal http://www.regulations.gov. Do not submit electronic comments to individual NMFS staff.

NMFS will hold four public hearings to receive comments from fishery participants and other members of the public regarding the proposed rule, as follows:

1. March 21, 2011, 3-5 p.m., NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA
2. March 22, 2011, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Ocean County Library, 112 Burr Street, Barnegat, NJ
3. March 28, 2011, 7-9 p.m., Manteo Town Hall, 407 Budleigh Street, Manteo, NC
4. April 5, 2011, 5:15-7:15 p.m., Crowne Plaza Hotel, 8777 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD

NMFS plans to make daily retention limit adjustments, if and as needed for the 2011 fishing year, via Federal Register notices separate from the final rule.

This notice is a courtesy to BFT fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact the HMS Management Division at (978) 281-9260.

MAR 11 2011

for Emily H. Menashes
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

Date

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Proposed Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas and quota specifications (in metric tons) for the 2011 fishing year (January 1-December 31, 2011)

		2011 Quota Specifications		
Category (% share of baseline quota)	**Baseline Allocation for 2011 and 2012 (per 2010 ICCAT Recommendation and Consolidated HMS FMP allocations)**	**Dead Discard Deduction (2009 proxy)**	**2010 Underharvest to Carry Forward to 2011**	**2011 Fishing Year Quota**
Total (100)	**923.7**	**-160.0**	**+94.9**	**858.6**
Angling (19.7)	**182.0** **SUBQUOTAS:** **School 94.9** **Reserve 17.6** **North 36.5** **South 40.8** **LS/SM 82.9** **North 39.1** **South 43.8** **Trophy 4.2** **North 1.4** **South 2.8**			**169.1** **SUBQUOTAS:** **School 94.9** **Reserve 17.6** **North 36.5** **South 40.8** **LS/SM 70.4** **North 33.2** **South 37.2** **Trophy 3.9** **North 1.3** **South 2.6**
General (47.1)	**435.1** **SUBQUOTAS:** **Jan 23.1** **Jun-Aug 217.6** **Sept 115.3** **Oct-Nov 56.6** **Dec 22.6**			**404.4** **SUBQUOTAS:** **Jan 21.4** **Jun-Aug 202.2** **Sept 107.2** **Oct-Nov 52.6** **Dec 21.0**
Harpoon (3.9)	**36.0**			**33.5**
Purse Seine (18.6)	**171.8**			**159.7**
Longline (8.1)	**74.8** **SUBQUOTAS:** **North (-NED) 29.9** **NED 25.0*** **South 44.9**			**69.5** **SUBQUOTAS:** **North (-NED) 27.8** **NED 25.0*** **South 41.7**
Trap (0.1)	**0.9**			**0.9**
Reserve (2.5)	**23.1**			**21.5**

*25 mt to account for bycatch of BFT in pelagic longline fisheries in the NED. Not included in totals at top of table.