of its 2015 commercial Atlantic bluefish quota to the State of Rhode Island. These quota adjustments are necessary to comply with the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provision. This announcement informs the public of the revised commercial quota for each state involved.

DATES: Effective September 21, 2015, through December 31, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Reid Lichwell, Fishery Management Specialist, (978)–281–9112.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations governing the bluefish fishery are found at 50 CFR part 648. The regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from Florida through Maine. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state are described in § 648.162.

The final rule implementing Amendment 1 to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan published in the **Federal Register** on July 26, 2000 (65 FR 45844), and provided a mechanism for transferring bluefish quota from one state to another. Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), can transfer or combine bluefish commercial quota under § 648.162(e). The Regional Administrator is required to consider the criteria in § 648.162(e)(1) in the evaluation of requests for quota transfers or combinations.

Maine has agreed to transfer 30,000 lb (13,608 kg) of its 2015 commercial quota to Rhode Island. This transfer was prompted by state officials in Rhode Island to ensure the state's commercial bluefish quota is not exceeded. The Regional Administrator has determined that the criteria set forth in § 648.162(e)(1) are met. The revised bluefish quotas for calendar year 2015 are: Maine, 5,037 lb (2,284 kg); and Rhode Island, 536,826 lb (243,500 kg), based on the final 2015 Atlantic Bluefish Specifications (80 FR 46848; August 6, 2015).

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: September 17, 2015.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

[FR Doc. 2015–24014 Filed 9–21–15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 900124–0127]

RIN 0648–XE164

Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Fisheries; 2016 Fishing Quotas for Atlantic Surfclams and Ocean Quahogs; and Suspension of Minimum Atlantic Surfclam Size Limit

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

ACTION: Temporary rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS suspends the minimum size limit for Atlantic surfclams for the 2016 fishing year. NMFS also announces that the quotas for the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries for 2016 will remain status quo. Regulations governing these fisheries require NMFS to notify the public of the allowable harvest levels for Atlantic surfclams and ocean quahogs from the Exclusive Economic Zone if the previous year's quota specifications remain unchanged.

DATES: Effective January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Douglas Potts, Fishery Policy Analyst, 978–281–9341.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The regulations implementing the fishery management plan (FMP) for the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries at 50 CFR 648.75(b)(3) authorize the Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), to suspend annually, by publication of a notification in the **Federal Register**, the minimum size limit for Atlantic surfclams. This action may be taken unless discard, catch, and biological sampling data indicate that 30 percent or more of the Atlantic surfclam resource have a shell length less than 4.75 inches (120 mm), and the overall reduced size is not attributable to harvest from beds where growth of the individual clams has been reduced because of density-dependent factors.

At its June 2015 meeting, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council voted to recommend that the Regional Administrator suspend the minimum size limit for Atlantic surfclams for the 2016 fishing year. Commercial surfclam data for 2015 were analyzed to determine the percentage of surfclams that were smaller than the minimum size requirement. The analysis indicated that 19.2 percent of the overall commercial landings were composed of surfclams that were less than the 4.75-in (120-mm) default minimum size. While still below the 30-percent trigger, this is a higher percentage of small clams than we have seen in previous years. A new stock assessment is planned for 2016, and may provide additional information about the health of this stock and whether density-dependent factors may have contributed to the increased prevalence of small clams. Based on the information available, the Regional Administrator concurs with the Council's recommendation, and is suspending the minimum size limit for Atlantic surfclams in the upcoming fishing year (January 1 through December 31, 2016).

The FMP for the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fisheries requires that NMFS issue a notice in the **Federal Register** of the upcoming year's quota, even in cases where the quota remains unchanged from the previous year. At its June 2015 meeting, the Council voted that no action be taken to change the quota specifications for Atlantic surfclams and ocean quahogs for the 2016 fishing year. As a result, we are announcing that the 2015 quota levels of 3.4 million bu (181 million L) for Atlantic surfclams, 5.3 million bu (284 million L) for ocean quahogs, and 100,000 Maine bu (3.524 million L) for Maine ocean quahogs, as announced in the **Federal Register** on December 20, 2013 (78 FR 77005), remain effective for the 2016 fishing year.

Classification

This action is authorized by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: September 17, 2015.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

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

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