

project that 90 percent of the Trimester 2 TAC was caught by November 7.

Effective November 15, 2016, the GB Cod Trimester TAC Area is closed for the remainder of Trimester 2, through December 31, 2016, to all common pool vessels fishing with trawl gear, sink gillnet gear, and longline/hook gear. The GB Cod Trimester TAC Area consists of statistical areas 521, 522, 525, and 561. The area reopens at the beginning of Trimester 3 on January 1, 2017.

The intent of the trimester TAC area closure is to close the area where 90

percent of the catch of the stock has occurred. However, data indicate that common pool vessels have caught approximately 35 percent of the total catch in Trimester 2 from outside the statistical areas that will be affected by the closure described above. Federal regulations at § 648.86(o) authorize the Regional Administrator to adjust the possession and trip limits for common pool vessels to prevent the overharvest or underharvest of the common pool quotas. Therefore, the possession and trip limits for GB cod, are reduced as

shown in Table 1, effective November 15, 2016, through December 31, 2016. This is intended to prevent the common pool from exceeding its sub-annual catch limit, but still allow for landing incidental catch of GB cod in areas not affected by the closure.

On January 1, 2017, common pool possession and trip limits for GB cod will return to the initial limits set by Framework Adjustment 55 to the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

TABLE 1—REDUCED COMMON POOL POSSESSION AND TRIP LIMITS FOR GB COD

Permit	Initial 2016 limits	Reduced limits
A DAS* (outside of the Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	500 lb per DAS up to 2,500 lb per trip	25 lb per DAS up to 50 lb per trip.
A DAS (Eastern U.S./Canada Area)	100 lb per DAS up to 500 lb per trip	25 lb per DAS up to 50 lb per trip.
A DAS (Special Access Programs)	1,000 lb per trip	50 lb per trip.
Handgear A	300 lb per trip	25 lb per trip.
Handgear B	25 lb per trip	25 lb per trip (unchanged).
Regular B DAS Program	100 lb per DAS up to 1,000 lb per trip	25 lb per DAS up to 50 lb per trip.

* Day-at-sea (DAS).

If a vessel declared its trip through the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) or the interactive voice response system, and crossed the VMS demarcation line prior to November 15, 2016, it may complete its trip within the Trimester TAC Area. Additionally, such vessels are not subject to the new possession and trip limits for that trip. A vessel that has set gillnet gear prior to November 15, 2016, may complete its trip by hauling such gear.

Any overage of the Trimester 1 or 2 TACs must be deducted from the Trimester 3 TAC. Any uncaught portion of the Trimester 1 and Trimester 2 TACs is carried over into the next trimester. If the common pool fishery exceeds its sub-ACL for the 2016 fishing year, the overage must be deducted from the common pool's sub-ACL for fishing year 2017. However, any uncaught portion of the common pool's sub-ACL may not be carried over into the following fishing year.

Weekly quota monitoring reports for the common pool fishery are on our Web site at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/MultiMonReports.htm>. We will continue to monitor common pool catch through vessel trip reports, dealer-reported landings, VMS catch reports, and other available information, and, if necessary, we will make additional adjustments to common pool management measures.

Classification

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

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) and 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment and the 30-day delayed effectiveness period because it would be impracticable and contrary to the public interest.

Regulations require the Regional Administrator to close a trimester TAC area to the common pool fishery when 90 percent of the Trimester TAC for a stock has been caught. Updated catch information only recently became available indicating that the common pool fishery caught 90 percent of its Trimester 2 TAC for GB cod by November 7, 2016. The time necessary to provide for prior notice and comment, and a 30-day delay in effectiveness, prevents the immediate closure of the GB Cod Trimester 2 TAC Area and reduction of the common pool's GB cod possession and trip limits. Delaying the effective date of a closure and possession and trip limit reduction increases the likelihood that the common pool fishery will exceed its quota of GB cod to the detriment of this stock, which could undermine management objectives of the Northeast Multispecies FMP.

Additionally, an overage of the common pool quota could cause negative economic impacts to the common pool fishery as a result of

overage paybacks in a future trimester or fishing year.

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

Dated: November 15, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 130919816-4205-02]

RIN 0648-XF044

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Herring Fishery; 2016 Management Area 1B Directed Fishery Closure

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; directed fishery closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is closing the directed herring fishery in management Area 1B, limiting catch from that area to 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) per trip and prohibiting landing more than once per calendar day, because it projects that 92 percent of the 2016 annual seasonal catch limit for that area will have been caught by the effective date. This action is

necessary to comply with the regulations implementing the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan and is intended to prevent over harvest of herring in Area 1B.

DATES: Effective 0001 hr local time, November 18, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Daniel Luers, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 282-8457.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The reader can find regulations governing the herring fishery at 50 CFR part 648. The regulations require annual specification of the overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, annual catch limit (ACL), optimum yield, domestic harvest and processing, U.S. at-sea processing, border transfer, and sub-ACLs for each management area. The 2016 Domestic Annual Harvest is 103,045 metric tons (mt); the 2016 sub-ACL allocated to Area 1B is 4,600 mt, and 138 mt of the Area 1B sub-ACL is set aside for research (78 FR 61828, October 4, 2013). The 2016 Area 1B sub-ACL was decreased to 2,941 mt to account for the 1,521 mt overage in 2014 catch. For management Area 1B, the catch of sub-ACL is currently allocated to the seasonal period from May 1 through December 31. There is no catch currently allocated to the seasonal period from January 1 through April 30. Therefore, under current regulations, vessels are prohibited from fishing for herring in or from Area 1B during the January 1 through April 30 period.

The regulations at § 648.201 require that when the NMFS Administrator of the Greater Atlantic Region (Regional Administrator) projects herring catch will reach 92 percent of the sub-ACL allocated in any of the four management areas designated in the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan (FMP), NMFS will prohibit herring vessel permit holders from fishing for, catching, possessing, transferring, or landing more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of herring per trip and landing more than once per calendar day in or from the specified management area for the remainder of the directed fishery closure period. The Regional Administrator monitors the herring fishery catch in each of the management areas based on dealer reports, state data, and other available information. NMFS publishes notification in the **Federal Register** of the date that the catch is projected to reach 92 percent of the management area sub-ACL, and of the closure of the

directed fishery and a 2,000-lb (907.2-kg) trip possession limit in the management area for the remainder of the seasonal closure period. Vessels that have entered port before the closure date may offload and sell more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of herring from Area 1B, from that trip. During the directed fishery closure, vessels may transit Area 1B with more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of herring on board only under the conditions specified below.

The Regional Administrator has determined, based on dealer reports and other available information, that the herring fleet will catch 92 percent of the total herring sub-ACL allocated to Area 1B for the 2016 seasonal period from May 1 through December 31, 2016, by November 18, 2016. Therefore, effective 0001 hr local time, November 18, 2016, federally permitted vessels may not fish for, catch, possess, transfer, or land more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of herring per trip and land more than once per calendar day, in or from Area 1B through December 31, 2016, except that vessels that have entered port before 0001 hr on November 18, 2016, may offload and sell more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of herring from Area 1B from that trip after the closure. During the directed fishery closure, November 18, 2016, through December 31, 2016, a vessel may transit through Area 1B with more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of herring on board, provided the vessel did not catch more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of herring in Area 1B and its fishing gear is not available for immediate use as defined by § 648.2. Effective 0001 hr, November 18, 2016, federally permitted dealers may not receive herring from federally permitted herring vessels that harvest more than 2,000 lb (907.2 kg) of herring from Area 1B through 2400 hr local time, December 31, 2016, unless it is from a trip landed by a vessel that entered port before 0001 hr on November 18, 2016. Under current regulations during the seasonal period from January 1, 2017, through April 30, 2017, vessels are prohibited from fishing for, catching, possessing, transferring, or landing herring from Area 1B during this seasonal period. Vessels may transit area 1B with herring on board provided such herring were caught in an area or areas with sub-ACL available and that all fishing gear is stowed and not available for immediate use as defined in § 648.2, and the vessel is issued a permit that authorizes the amount of herring on board for the area where the

herring was harvested. Beginning on May 1, 2017, the 2017 allocation for Area 1B is expected to become available.

Classification

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

NMFS finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment because it would be contrary to the public interest and impracticable. The herring fishery opened for the 2016 fishing year on January 1, 2016, and Management Area 1B opened on May 1, 2016. Data indicating the herring fleet will have landed at least 92 percent of the 2016 sub-ACL allocated to Area 1B have only recently become available. Landings data is updated on a weekly basis, and NMFS monitors catch data on a daily basis as catch increases toward the limit for the area. Further, high-volume catch and landings in this fishery increase total catch relative to the sub-ACL quickly. This action is a required response to that recently available data and closes the directed herring fishery and imposes a 2,000-lb (907.2-kg) possession limit for Management Area 1B through December 31, 2016, under current regulations. The regulations at § 648.201(a) require such action to ensure that herring vessels do not exceed the 2016 sub-ACL allocated to Area 1B. If implementation of this closure is delayed to solicit prior public comment, the sub-ACL for Area 1B for this fishing year may be exceeded, thereby undermining the conservation objectives of the FMP. If sub-ACLs are exceeded, the excess must also be deducted from a future sub-ACL and would reduce future fishing opportunities. Also, the public had prior notice and full opportunity to comment on this process when these provisions were put in place. Based on these considerations, NMFS further finds, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), good cause to waive the 30-day delayed effectiveness period for the reasons stated above.

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

Dated: November 15, 2016.

Emily H. Menashes,

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

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