

harvest the full annual U.S. BFT quota without exceeding it based on the goals of the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and Amendment 7, including to achieve optimum yield on a continuing basis and to optimize the ability of all permit categories to harvest their full BFT quota allocations (related to § 635.27(a)(8)(x)). Specific to the General category, this includes providing opportunity equitably across all time periods.

Based on the considerations above, NMFS is transferring 60 mt of the available 78.5 mt of Reserve category quota to the General category for the September 2018 fishery, resulting in a subquota of 183.7 mt for the September 2018 fishery and 18.5 mt in the Reserve category.

Closure of the September 2018 General Category Fishery

Based on the best available bluefin tuna General category landings information (*i.e.*, 145.6 mt landed as of September 17, 2018) as well as average catch rates and anticipated fishing conditions, NMFS projects that the General category September subquota of 183.7 mt, as adjusted in this action, will be reached by September 23, 2018, and that the fishery should be closed to avoid exceedance of the adjusted quota. Through this action, we are closing the General category bluefin tuna fishery effective 11:30 p.m., September 23, 2018, through September 30, 2018. The fishery will reopen on October 1, 2018, with a baseline quota of 60.7 mt (72.2 mt under the ICCAT quota rule, if finalized as proposed) available for the October through November time period. Therefore, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant BFT by persons aboard vessels permitted in the Atlantic tunas General and HMS Charter/Headboat categories must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time on September 23, 2018. The General category will reopen automatically on October 1, 2018, for the October through November 2018 subquota period. This action applies to those vessels permitted in the General category, as well as to those HMS Charter/Headboat permitted vessels with a commercial sale endorsement when fishing commercially for BFT fishing commercially for BFT. For information regarding the HMS Charter/Headboat commercial sale endorsement, see 82 FR 57543, December 6, 2017. The intent of this closure is to prevent overharvest of the available General category September BFT subquota.

Fishermen 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. All BFT that are released must be handled in a manner that will maximize their 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 www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/.

Monitoring and Reporting

NMFS will continue to monitor the BFT fishery closely. 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 adjustment, as well as closures, and may result in enforcement actions. Additionally, and separate from the dealer reporting requirement, General and HMS Charter/Headboat 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.).

Depending on the level of fishing effort and catch rates of BFT, NMFS may determine that additional action (*e.g.*, quota adjustment, daily retention limit adjustment, or closure) is 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 call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (978) 281-9260, or access hmspermits.noaa.gov, for updates on quota monitoring and inseason adjustments.

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 quota transfers 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. These fisheries are currently underway and the currently available quota for the subcategory is projected to be reached

shortly. Affording prior notice and opportunity for public comment to implement the quota transfer is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as such a delay would likely result in exceedance of the General category September fishery subquota or earlier closure of the fishery while fish are available on the fishing grounds. Subquota exceedance may result in the need to reduce quota for the General category later in the year and thus could affect later fishing opportunities. 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 also is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness.

This action is being taken under §§ 635.27(a)(9) and 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: September 18, 2018.

Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,
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. 170828822-70999-02]

RIN 0648-XG475

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Scup Fishery; Adjustment to the 2018 Winter II Quota

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; inseason adjustment.

SUMMARY: NMFS adjusts the 2018 Winter II commercial scup quota and per-trip Federal landing limit. This action is intended to comply with Framework Adjustment 3 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan that established the rollover of unused commercial scup quota from the Winter I to Winter II period. This document is intended to inform the public of this quota and trip limit change.

DATES: Effective October 1, 2018, through December 31, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cynthia Hanson, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9180; or Cynthia.Hanson@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS published a final rule for Framework Adjustment 3 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan in the **Federal Register** on November 3, 2003 (68 FR 62250), implementing a process to roll over unused Winter I commercial scup quota (January 1 through April 30) to be added to the Winter II period quota (October 1 through December 31).¹ The framework also allows adjustment of the commercial possession limit for the Winter II period dependent on the amount of quota rolled over from the Winter I period.

For 2018, the initial Winter II quota is 3,822,816 lb (1,734 mt). The best available landings information indicates that 5,943,861 lb (2,696 mt) remain of the 10,820,000-lb (4,908-mt) Winter I quota. Consistent with Framework 3, the full amount of unused 2018 Winter I quota is being transferred to Winter II, resulting in a revised 2018 Winter II quota of 9,766,677 lb (4,430 mt). Because the amount transferred is between 5.5 and 6.0 million lb (2,495 to 2,722 mt), the Federal per trip possession limit will increase from 12,000 lb (5.4 mt) to 28,500 lb (13 mt), as outlined in the final rule that established the possession limit and quota rollover procedures for this year, published on December 22, 2017 (82 FR 60682).

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 under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment on this in-season adjustment because it would be contrary to the public interest. This action transfers unused quota from Winter I Period to the remaining Winter II Period to make it accessible to the commercial scup fishery. If implementation of this in-season action is delayed to solicit prior public comment, the objective of the fishery management plan to achieve the optimum yield from the fishery could be compromised. Deteriorating weather conditions during the latter part of the

fishing year may reduce fishing effort, and could also prevent the annual quota from being fully harvested. This would conflict with the agency's legal obligation under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to achieve the optimum yield from a fishery on a continuing basis, resulting in a negative economic impact on vessels permitted to fish in this fishery. Moreover, the rollover process being applied here was the subject of notice and comment rulemaking, and the range of potential trip limit changes were outlined in the final 2018 scup specifications that were published December 22, 2017; which were developed through public notice and comment. 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: September 18, 2018.

Margo B. Schulze-Haugen,
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 679

[Docket No. 170817779-8161-02]

RIN 0648-XG492

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Northern Rockfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for northern rockfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2018 northern rockfish initial total allowable catch (ITAC) specified for the BSAI.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs., Alaska local time (A.l.t.), September 18, 2018, through 2400 hrs., A.l.t., December 31, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2018 northern rockfish ITAC specified for the BSAI is 5,185 metric tons as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (83 FR 8365, February 27, 2018).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS, (Regional Administrator) has determined that the 2018 northern rockfish ITAC in the BSAI will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 5,000 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 185 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for northern rockfish in the BSAI.

While this closure is in effect the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the directed fishery closure of northern rockfish in the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of September 14, 2018.

¹ Effective May 21, 2018, the Winter II period start date was changed from November 1 to October 1 as a part of Framework Adjustment 12 (83 FR 17314; April 19, 2018).