

(1.292 million kg) (50 CFR 622.41(q)(2)(iii)(B)). All weights given are in round weight.

Private Angling Component

For the private angling component, NMFS has issued EFPs that allow each Gulf state (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida) to set the season for red snapper that are landed from state and Federal waters in that state during 2018 and 2019. The EFPs allocate a portion of the private angling quota to each state, and each state is required under the terms and conditions of the EFPs to constrain landings to its allocation. The combined allocations equal the private angling component quota.

To accommodate the EFPs, the private angling season in federal waters will be closed all year, but private anglers with the appropriate state licenses are exempt from regulations at 50 CFR 622.34(b) (recreational season closure for red snapper) and 50 CFR 622.41(q)(2)(i) (private angler component in-season closure) if these anglers hold the appropriate state fishing permits and are landing red snapper in a participating state during the state's open season. Therefore, there will be no Federal season for the private angling component in 2019, and this closure notification will take effect at 12:01 a.m., local time, June 1, 2019.

The Gulf states will establish seasons during which red snapper caught in state and Federal waters can be landed. States will monitor red snapper landings and close their respective fishing seasons if the state's assigned quota is reached or projected to be reached. Private anglers should consult the regulations for the Gulf state where they wish to land red snapper to determine state season dates and landing requirements.

Federal For-Hire Component

The 2019 red snapper Federal for-hire fishing season has been determined to be 62 days based on NMFS' projection of the date landings are expected to reach the component ACT. For details about the calculation of the projection for 2019, see <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/recreational-fishing/gulf-mexico-recreational-red-snapper-management>. Therefore, the 2019 Federal recreational season for the Federal for-hire component will begin at 12:01 a.m., local time, June 1, 2019, and close at 12:01 a.m., local time, August 2, 2019.

On and after the effective date of the Federal for-hire component closure, the bag and possession limits for red snapper for Federal for-hire vessels are

zero. When either the Federal for-hire component or entire recreational sector is closed, these bag and possession limits apply in the Gulf onboard a vessel for which a valid Federal for-hire permit for Gulf reef fish has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters.

Classification

The Regional Administrator for the NMFS Southeast Region has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of Gulf red snapper and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.41(q)(2)(i) and (ii) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action is based on the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the private angling and Federal for-hire components for the red snapper recreational sector constitute good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment on this temporary rule pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), because such procedures are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule implementing the recreational red snapper ACLs and ACTs, and the rule implementing the requirement to close the recreational components when the ACTs are projected to be reached have already been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closures.

Providing prior notice and opportunity for public comment are contrary to the public interest because it would require time and many for-hire operations book trips for clients in advance and need as much advance notice as NMFS is able to provide to adjust their business plans to account for the fishing season.

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

Dated: March 7, 2019.

Karen H. Abrams,

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

[FR Doc. 2019-04430 Filed 3-7-19; 4:15 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 181010932-9124-02]

RIN 0648-XG562

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; 2019 Bluefish Specifications

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

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS issues final specifications for the 2019 Atlantic bluefish fishery. This action establishes allowable harvest levels for the bluefish stock, to prevent overfishing while allowing optimum yield, consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan. This rule is also intended to inform the public of these specifications for the 2019 fishing year.

DATES: Effective March 12, 2019, through December 31, 2019.

ADDRESSES: Copies of these specifications, including the Supplemental Information Report, and other supporting documents for the action, are available upon request from Dr. Christopher M. Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Suite 201, 800 N State Street, Dover, DE 19901. These documents are also accessible via the internet at <http://www.mafinc.org>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cynthia Ferrio, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9180.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The bluefish fishery is jointly managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission under the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The FMP requires the specification of the acceptable biological catch (ABC), annual catch limit (ACL), annual catch targets (ACT), commercial quotas, recreational harvest limit, and other management measures, for up to three years at a time. This action implements final 2019 specifications for the bluefish fishery, which are very similar to 2018. The bluefish stock will undergo an operational assessment in mid-2019 that is designed to incorporate updated

Marine Recreational Information Program information. It is expected that the 2020 specifications will be developed using this assessment.

The proposed rule for this action published in the **Federal Register** on December 26, 2018 (83 FR 66234), and public comments were accepted through January 10, 2019. Additional background information regarding the development of these specifications was

provided in the proposed rule and is not repeated here.

Final Specifications

This action implements the 2019 Atlantic bluefish specifications (Table 1), as outlined in the proposed rule. Because the most recent data update indicated that the bluefish stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, the 2019 specifications are very similar to 2018, with only minor

adjustments to the final commercial quota and recreational harvest limit to account for the most recent full year of recreational catch data (2017), and an adjusted sector transfer. All other management measures, including the recreational possession limit of 15 fish per person, remain unchanged. For more information on the Council’s recommendations and decisionmaking process, please see the proposed rule (83 FR 66234).

TABLE 1—SUMMARY OF FINAL 2019 BLUEFISH SPECIFICATIONS

| | Final 2019 specifications | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| | pounds | metric tons |
| Overfishing Limit | 27,972,252 | 12,688 |
| ABC = ACL | 21,814,741 | 9,895 |
| Commercial ACT | 3,708,175 | 1,682 |
| Recreational ACT | 18,106,565 | 8,213 |
| Commercial TAL | 3,708,175 | 1,682 |
| Recreational TAL | 15,615,342 | 7,083 |
| Sector Transfer | 3,999,185 | 1,814 |
| Commercial Quota | 7,709,565 | 3,497 |
| Recreational Harvest Limit | 11,620,566 | 5,271 |

Table 2 provides the commercial fishery state allocations for 2019 based on the final 2019 coast-wide commercial

quota and the allocated percentages defined in the FMP. No states exceeded their state allocated quota in 2018;

therefore, no accountability measures need to be implemented for the 2019 fishing year.

TABLE 2—2019 BLUEFISH STATE COMMERCIAL QUOTA ALLOCATIONS

| State | Percent share | Quota allocation (lb) | Quota allocation (mt) |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Maine | 0.67 | 51,538 | 23.38 |
| New Hampshire | 0.41 | 31,956 | 14.49 |
| Massachusetts | 6.72 | 517,828 | 234.88 |
| Rhode Island | 6.81 | 524,874 | 238.08 |
| Connecticut | 1.27 | 97,626 | 44.28 |
| New York | 10.39 | 800,645 | 363.17 |
| New Jersey | 14.82 | 1,142,264 | 518.12 |
| Delaware | 1.88 | 144,801 | 65.68 |
| Maryland | 3.00 | 231,426 | 104.97 |
| Virginia | 11.88 | 915,857 | 415.43 |
| North Carolina | 32.06 | 2,471,746 | 1121.17 |
| South Carolina | 0.04 | 2,714 | 1.23 |
| Georgia | 0.01 | 732 | 0.33 |
| Florida | 10.06 | 775,558 | 351.79 |
| Total | 100.00 | 7,709,565 | 3,497.00 |

Comments

The public comment period for the proposed rule ended on January 10, 2019. One comment received from the public claimed rampant overfishing in the bluefish fishery is occurring due to widespread corruption and commercial profiteering. However, this commenter presented no rationale or evidence supporting these claims, and the most recent assessment updates indicate that the bluefish stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. No changes

to the proposed specifications were made as a result of this comment.

Changes From the Proposed Rule

There are no changes from the proposed rule.

Classification

Pursuant to section 304(b)(1)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that this final rule is consistent with the Bluefish FMP, other provisions of the

Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law.

This final rule is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866 because this action contains no implementing regulations.

This final rule does not duplicate, conflict, or overlap with any existing Federal rules.

This action does not contain a collection of information requirement for purposes of the Paperwork Reduction Act.

The Chief Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration during the proposed rule stage that this action would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The factual basis for the certification was published in the proposed rule and is not repeated here. No comments were received regarding this certification, and the initial certification remains unchanged. As a result, a final regulatory flexibility analysis is not required and none has been prepared.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) to waive the 30-day delay of effectiveness period for this rule, to ensure that the final specifications are in place as close as practicable to the start of the 2019 Atlantic bluefish fishing year, which began on January 1, 2019. This action establishes the final specifications (*i.e.*, annual catch limits) for the bluefish fishery for the 2019 fishing year. A delay in effectiveness well beyond the start of the 2019 fishing year would be contrary to the public interest, as it could create confusion in the commercial bluefish industry.

This rule is being issued at the earliest possible date. The proposed rule was prepared and published in December 2018, and the public comment period ended on January 10, 2019. The partial Federal government shutdown prevented any work on this action from December 22, 2018, through January 25, 2019. We had expected to prepare and publish this final rule in January but were unable to do so because of the shutdown. A 30-day delay in effectiveness would only prolong the amount of time the bluefish fishery is forced to function in the 2019 fishing year without established specifications, which is contrary to the public interest.

Furthermore, regulated parties do not require any additional time to come into compliance with this rule, and thus, a 30-day delay does not provide any benefit. Unlike actions that require an adjustment period to comply with new rules, bluefish fishery participants will not have to purchase new equipment or otherwise expend time or money to comply with these status quo management measures. Rather, complying with this final rule simply means adhering to the catch limits and management measures set for bluefish fishing year 2019. Therefore, there would be no benefit to delaying the implementation of these specifications.

For these reasons, a 30-day delay in effectiveness would be contrary to the

public interest, and is therefore waived. As a result, there is good cause to implement these specifications on March 12, 2019.

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

Dated: March 7, 2019.

Samuel D. Rauch, III,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 170816769-8162-02]

RIN 0648-XG884

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 in the Gulf of Alaska

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 630 in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the B season allowance of the 2019 total allowable catch of pollock for Statistical Area 630 in the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), March 11, 2019, through 1200 hrs, A.l.t., May 31, 2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Josh Keaton, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (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 A season allowance of the 2019 total allowable catch (TAC) of pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA is 3,522 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2018 and 2019 harvest specifications for groundfish in the GOA (83 FR 8768, March 1, 2018) and inseason adjustment (84 FR 33, January 4, 2019).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator has determined that the A season allowance of the 2019 TAC of pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA is necessary to account for the incidental catch in other anticipated fisheries. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 3,000 mt and is setting aside the remaining 522 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 pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA.

While this closure is effective 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 closure of directed fishing for pollock in Statistical Area 630 of the GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of March 6, 2019.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: March 7, 2019.

Karen H. Abrams,

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

[FR Doc. 2019-04464 Filed 3-7-19; 4:15 pm]

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