



NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

NMFS Announces the Publication of the Amendment 7 Proposed Rule, and Availability of Draft Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan

August 20, 2013

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is proposing Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to address bluefin tuna management concerns due to recent trends and characteristics of the bluefin fisheries. This action is necessary to meet domestic management objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act including preventing overfishing, achieving optimal yield, and minimizing bycatch to the extent practicable, as well as the objectives of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA) and obligations pursuant to binding recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). NMFS takes these actions to reduce and account for bluefin dead discards in all categories; optimize fishing opportunities in all categories within the United States' quota; enhance reporting and monitoring; and adjust other management measures as necessary.

What will it do?

The proposed rule, which will publish in the Federal Register on August 21, may be found at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/FMP/AM7.htm>. The full range of alternatives considered are included in the draft Environmental Impact Statement, which can be also be found on that page.

The preferred alternatives (proposed measures in the proposed rule) in Draft Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP and the quota categories to which the Alternatives would apply are listed below:

	Preferred Alternatives in DEIS	Regulated Quota Category
Quota Allocation		
Permanent Reallocation	<i>Alternative A 2a - Reallocation to Longline Category Based on Historical 68-mt Dead Discard Allowance</i>	Longline, Purse Seine, General, Harpoon, Angling
Annual Reallocation	<i>Alternative A 3a - Annual Reallocation of Bluefin Quota from Purse Seine Category</i>	Longline, Purse Seine, General, Harpoon, Angling

	Preferred Alternatives in DEIS	Regulated Quota Category
Other Measures		
Modify General Category Time-Period Subquota Allocations	<i>Alternative E 1c - Provide Additional Flexibility for General Category Quota Adjustment</i>	General
NMFS Authority to Adjust Harpoon Category Retention Limits Inseason	<i>Alternative E 2b - NMFS Authority to Adjust Harpoon Category Retention Limits Inseason</i>	Harpoon
Angling Category Trophy Subquota Distribution	<i>Alternative E 3b - Allocate a Portion of the Trophy South Sub-Quota to the Gulf of Mexico</i>	Angling Charter/Headboat
Change Start Date of Purse Seine Category to June 1	<i>Alternative E 4b - Change Start Date of Purse Seine Category to June 1</i>	Purse Seine
Rules Regarding Permit Category Changes	<i>Alternative E 5b - Modify Rules Regarding Permit Category Changes</i>	Longline, Purse Seine, General, Harpoon, Angling, Charter/Headboat, Trap
North Atlantic Albacore Tuna Quota	<i>Alternative E 6b - Implement North Atlantic Albacore Tuna Quota</i>	Longline, Purse Seine, General, Harpoon, Angling, Charter/Headboat, Trap
Transiting	<i>Alternative E 7b - Pelagic and Bottom Longline Transiting Closed Areas</i>	Longline

Who is affected?

Draft Amendment 7 could affect:

- Any commercial fishermen using pelagic longline gear, handgear, or purse seines to catch bluefin tuna.
- Any recreational fishermen using handgear to catch bluefin tuna.
- Any dealers who buy bluefin tuna.

Submit Comments by October 23, 2013:

NMFS will hold numerous public hearings for this rulemaking along the Atlantic Coast, including the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico regions until the end of the comment period. During these hearings, NMFS will receive public feedback on the proposed management measures. In addition, NMFS will consult with the HMS Advisory Panel at its September 9-12, 2013, meeting, and there will be additional opportunities for public comment. Dates, times and locations of the public hearings are available at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/AM7.htm. NMFS has also asked to present information on the proposed rule and Draft Amendment 7 to the Gulf, South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and New England Fishery Management Councils. Information on the date and time of that/those presentations will be provided on the Council agenda(s).