

effectiveness of these conservation measures.

### Classification

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of E.O. 12866.

The AA has determined that this action is necessary to respond to an emergency situation to provide adequate protection for endangered and threatened sea turtles, primarily the Kemp's ridley turtle, pursuant to the ESA and other applicable law.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), the AA finds that there is good cause to waive prior notice and opportunity to comment on this action. It would be contrary to the public interest to provide prior notice and opportunity for comment because providing notice and comment would prevent the agency from implementing this action in a timely manner to protect the listed sea turtles. Notification of and opportunity to comment on, this action was provided through the proposed rule which established these actions (57 FR 18446, April 30, 1992). For the same reasons, the AA finds good cause also under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) not to delay the effective date of this rule for 30 days. NMFS is making the rule effective December 10, 1999 through January 10, 2000. As stated earlier, this restriction has been announced on the NOAA weather radio, in newspapers, and other media.

As prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required to be provided for this notification by 5 U.S.C. 553, or by any other law, the analytical requirements of 5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*, are inapplicable.

The AA prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the final rule (57 FR 57348, December 4, 1992) requiring turtle excluder device use in shrimp trawls and creating the regulatory framework for the issuance of notices such as this. Copies of the EA are available (see **ADDRESSES**).

Dated: December 10, 1999.

**Penelope D. Dalton,**

*Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,  
National Marine Fisheries Services.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 635

[I.D. 120199C]

#### Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fisheries; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna

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

**ACTION:** Retention limit adjustment.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS adjusts the daily retention limit for the Angling category fishery for Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) in all areas to one large school or small medium BFT (measuring 47 to less than 73 inches (119 to less than 185 cm) curved fork length) per vessel. The Angling category trophy retention limit for large medium and giant BFT remains at one fish per vessel, per fishing year. This action is being taken to lengthen the fishing season and to ensure reasonable fishing opportunities in all geographic areas without risking overharvest of the quota established for the Angling category fishery.

**DATES:** The daily retention limit adjustment is effective 1 a.m., local time, January 1, 2000, until May 31, 2000.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Pat Scida or Sarah McLaughlin, 978-281-9260.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Regulations implemented under the authority of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*) and the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) governing the harvest of BFT by persons and vessels subject to U.S. jurisdiction are found at 50 CFR part 635.

Implementing regulations for the Atlantic tuna fisheries at § 635.23 allow for adjustments to the daily retention limits in order to provide for maximum utilization of the quota over the longest possible period of time. NMFS may increase or reduce the per angler retention limit for any size class BFT or may change the per angler limit to a per boat limit or a per boat limit to a per angler limit.

Since October 7, 1999, NMFS has maintained the daily retention limit at one large school or small medium BFT per vessel. In order to maintain the current daily retention limit through the end of the 1999 fishing year (May 31, 2000), NMFS must announce a daily retention limit adjustment since the

current retention limit is valid only through December 31, 1999 (64 FR 10576, March 5, 1999).

Preliminary Large Pelagic Survey estimates of landings from the beginning of the 1999 fishing year (June 1, 1999) through November 7, 1999, indicate that approximately 34 metric tons (mt) of school BFT and approximately 44 mt of large school/small medium BFT have been landed; reported landings of large medium and giant BFT total approximately 1 mt.

NMFS adjusts the BFT Angling category daily retention limit for all areas one large school or small medium BFT (measuring 47 to less than 73 inches (119 to less than 185 cm) curved fork length) per vessel. In addition, each Angling category vessel may retain no more than one large medium or giant BFT (measuring 73 inches (185 cm or greater) per year. Landing rates during the first few months of 1998 and 1999 were low, but landing rates during the winter fishery were high in 1996 and 1997. This action is being taken to provide the greatest geographic and temporal range of data collection and fishing opportunities without risking overharvest.

This daily retention limit adjustment is effective January 1 through May 31, 2000. The daily retention limit and the duration of daily retention limit adjustment have been selected based on an examination of past catch and effort rates. NMFS will continue to monitor the Angling category fishery closely through the Automated Landings Reporting System, the North Carolina harvest tagging program, and the Large Pelagic Survey. Depending on the level of fishing effort and catch rates of BFT, NMFS may determine that an interim closure or additional retention limit adjustment is necessary to enhance scientific data collection from, and fishing opportunities in, all geographic areas. Additionally, NMFS may determine that an allocation from the school BFT reserve is warranted to further fishery management objectives.

If NMFS determines, based on landings statistics and other available information, that a BFT quota in any category or, as appropriate, subcategory has been exceeded or has not been reached, NMFS shall subtract the overharvest from, or add the underharvest to, that quota category for the following fishing year, provided that the total of the adjusted category quotas and the reserve is consistent with a recommendation of ICCAT regarding country quotas, the take of school BFT, and the allowance for dead discards.

Closures or subsequent adjustments to the daily retention limit, if any, shall be

announced through publication in the **Federal Register**. In addition, anglers may call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (888) 872-8862 or (978) 281-9305 for updates on quota monitoring and retention limit adjustments. Anglers aboard Charter/Headboat category vessels, when engaged in recreational fishing for school, large school, and small medium BFT, are subject to the same rules as anglers aboard Angling category vessels. All BFT landed under the Angling category quota must be reported within 24 hours of landing to the NMFS Automated Landings Reporting System by calling (888) 872-8862 or, if landed in the state of North Carolina, to a reporting station prior to offloading. Information about the North Carolina harvest tagging programs, including reporting station locations, can be obtained by calling (800) 338-7804. In addition, anglers aboard permitted vessels may continue to tag and release BFT of all sizes under a tag-and-release program, provided the angler tags all BFT so caught, regardless of whether previously tagged, with conventional tags issued or approved by NMFS, returns such fish to the sea immediately after tagging with a minimum of injury, and reports the tagging, and, if the BFT was previously tagged, the information on the previous tag (50 CFR 635.26).

#### Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 635.23(b)(3). This action is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.* and 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: December 9, 1999.

**Gary C. Matlock,**

*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

[I.D. 120899B]

### Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements; Public Workshops

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

**ACTION:** Notice of workshops.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS will present workshops on recordkeeping and reporting requirements for the Alaska groundfish fisheries.

**DATES:** Workshops will be held on several dates. See SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION for specific dates and times.

**ADDRESSES:** The workshops will be held at several locations. See SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION specific locations where the workshops will be held.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Patsy A. Bearden, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS and the U.S. Coast Guard North Pacific Regional Fisheries Training Center will present an integrated approach to clarify and simplify NMFS 2000 recordkeeping and reporting requirements for the Alaska groundfish fisheries, to introduce the new shoreside processor electronic logbook delivery report, and to provide information on required permits and instructions on completion and submittal of the logsheets and reporting forms to record information for the American Fisheries Act, open-access groundfish, Western Alaska Community Development Quota Program, Individual Fishing Quota Program, and the at-sea scale program. Instructions on completion of fish

tickets and the Commercial Operators Annual Report will be presented by Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff. Comments from the fishing industry will be welcome on the recordkeeping and reporting program and on any related issues.

#### Special Accommodations

These workshops will be physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Patsy Bearden at 907-586-7228 at least 7 working days prior to the meeting date.

#### Dates of Workshops

Wednesday, December 15, 1999, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Alaska local time (A.l.t.);

Thursday, December 16, 1999, 7 p.m., A.l.t.;

Friday, December 17, 1999, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., A.l.t.;

Thursday, January 6, 2000, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Washington local time; and

Wednesday, February 9, 2000, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., A.l.t.

#### Location of Workshops

December 15, 1999, Bidarka Inn, 575 Sterling Highway, Homer, AK;

December 16, 1999, U.S. Coast Guard, North Pacific Regional Training Center, Kodiak, AK;

December 17, 1999, U.S. Coast Guard, North Pacific Regional Training Center, Kodiak, AK;

January 6, 2000, NMFS Alaska Fishery Science Center, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE, Seattle, WA; and

February 9, 2000, Westmark Shee Atika Hotel, 300 Seward Street, Sitka, AK.

Dated: December 9, 1999.

**Bruce C. Morehead,**

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

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