

Dear Bluefin Tuna Dealer:

On December 2, 2014, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a final rule in the Federal Register (enclosed) that includes new regulations to address various issues in the management of Atlantic bluefin tuna. This letter addresses the management measures finalized under Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) (Amendment 7). **Federal dealers who intend to purchase landings from vessels catching bluefin tuna with pelagic longline or purse seine gear will be subject to new reporting requirements that are effective January 1, 2015.**

Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) Online System and Landings Transactions

The IBQ program is a limited access privilege program that limits the total incidental catch (landings and dead discards) of bluefin in the Longline category. The IBQ program will be managed through NMFS' Southeast Regional Office Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program webpage (<https://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifqgt/main.html>). Dealers who intend to purchase landings from vessels catching bluefin tuna with pelagic longline gear or purse seine gear must create an account in the electronic IBQ system. *Only dealers with IBQ dealer accounts can purchase bluefin tuna caught using longline or purse seine gear effective January 1, 2015.* You will be provided log-in instructions and IBQ system requirements in a future mailing.

Dealers must use the electronic IBQ dealer account to complete landings transactions. A dealer purchasing bluefin from pelagic longline or purse seine vessels (or purchasing other HMS from pelagic longline or purse seine vessels that discarded dead bluefin tuna) must enter all bluefin landings and bluefin dead discard information from the trip. Specifically, the information will include the weight of all bluefin landed. The dealer must coordinate with the vessel owner or operator, or their designee to enter dead discard information as well as landings, into the IBQ system. The landing transaction completed by the dealer must include the name and permit number of the vessel that landed the bluefin and any other information regarding the landings, as instructed by NMFS (such as the shareholder's account number, vessel account number, individual tag number, weights for landed bluefin tuna, and the number of dead discarded bluefin tuna by appropriate length bin). The vessel owner or operator, or designee, must validate the landings information and enter the dead discard information (such as numbers of fish by approximate size) before the transaction is processed. Landings reports must be entered no later than 24 hours after receipt of the bluefin.

Please note: This new reporting requirement for bluefin tuna landings (and dead discards) does not replace your current bluefin tuna reporting requirement. Dealers will be required to also continue the current method of submitting landings reports via fax for purse seine and pelagic longline vessels, in addition to the reporting information into the IBQ account. In the future, NMFS will evaluate whether continuation of both types of reporting is necessary.

For more detailed information on the IBQ program please see *Frequently Asked Questions for the Atlantic HMS Bluefin Tuna IBQ Program*, enclosed. For IBQ system support or questions about the program please contact IBQ Customer Service at 301-427-8591 or NMFS.HMS.IBQ@noaa.gov.

Other New Management Measures

- NMFS has the authority to close the pelagic longline fishery.
- NMFS has eliminated target catch requirements for the pelagic longline fishery.
- Mandatory retention of dead legal sized bluefin in the pelagic longline fishery is required.
- NMFS is implementing the U.S. annual quota of northern albacore tuna recommended by ICCAT as well as provisions for the accounting of overharvest and underharvest of the quota via annual specifications.
- NMFS annually will publish a notice in the Federal Register announcing the start of the Purse Seine category fishery, within a range from June 1 through August 15.
- NMFS is implementing two new pelagic longline gear restricted areas: Cape Hatters Gear Restricted Area with conditional access (December-April) and Spring Gulf of Mexico Gear Restricted Area (April-May).
 - Note: Conditional access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area is evaluated based on bluefin interactions, logbook reporting compliance, and observer program compliance. It is important for the vessel owners or operators to receive weigh out slips in a timely manner in order to submit logbooks and comply with the observer program.

For more information about all aspects of Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/documents/fmp/am7/index.html>, see the Amendment 7 final rule and Compliance Guide, or contact the HMS Management Division at 978-281-9260 (Brad McHale or Thomas Warren) or 301-427-8503 (Craig Cockrell or Carrie Soltanoff) or 727-824-5399 (Jennifer Cudney).

Sincerely,



Margo Schulze-Haugen, Division Chief
Highly Migratory Species Management Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries