

[Vessel Primary Owner]
Permit # [permit number]; F/V [vessel name]; Vessel ID [vessel ID]
[Street]
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear Atlantic Tunas Purse Seine Category Participant:

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 the bluefin tuna fishery. This letter addresses the management measures finalized under Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) (Amendment 7), and provides each Atlantic Tunas Purse Seine category participant with information on the following measures:

- (1) **Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) Program**
- (2) **Annual quota reallocation**
- (3) **Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements**
- (4) **Purse Seine category fishing year start date**
- (5) **Other new management measures**

Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) Program

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. Atlantic Tunas Purse Seine category participants are eligible to participate in the IBQ program in order to lease quota allocation among purse seine participants or to pelagic longline permit holders, and are required to participate in the program in order to report their bluefin catch. The IBQ program will be managed through NMFS's Southeast Regional Office Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program webpage (<https://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifqgt/main.html>). Participants will be notified of log-in information and IBQ system requirements in a future mailing (general IBQ system information will also be distributed via e-mail to HMS Newslist subscribers).

Atlantic Tunas Purse Seine category participants will be issued a percentage of the overall Purse Seine category quota, which is 159.1 mt under the current ICCAT U.S. total allowable catch (TAC). **For the 2015 fishing year, each participant will be allocated quota based on the new Amendment 7 formula, described below under “Annual quota reallocation.”** As of 2015, all dead discards, as well as landings of bluefin tuna will count against a vessel's quota. Once the total amount of quota allocation is utilized, participants must either lease additional quota or stop fishing until more quota is disbursed.

Purse Seine quota is designated for use in the Atlantic (named “PSG ATL” in the IBQ system). Atlantic allocation may only be used for bluefin landings and dead discards in the Atlantic.

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

Annual quota reallocation

- Annually, NMFS will make allocations of quota to Pure Seine category participants through a two-step process: 1) NMFS will calculate equal amounts of quota for the participants (20% of the total quota for each participant); and 2) NMFS may make adjustments to the individual participant quotas based on the bluefin catch by such participants in the previous year (described in detail below).
- Purse Seine category participants will be allocated either 100%, 75%, 50%, or 25% of their individual allocation, according to the following allocation criteria:
 - If the catch is between 0 and 20% of the base quota in Year 1, the participant will be allocated 25% of the base quota in Year 2, and 75% of the quota will be reallocated to the Reserve category for that year.
 - If the catch is greater than 20% and up to 45% of the base quota in Year 1, the participant will be allocated 50% of the quota in Year 2, and 50% of the quota will be reallocated to the Reserve category for that year.
 - If the catch is greater than 45% and up to 70% of the base quota in Year 1, the participant will be allocated 75% of the quota in Year 2, and 25% of the quota will be transferred to the Reserve category for that year.
 - If the catch is greater than 70% of the base quota in Year 1, the participant will be allocated 100% of the baseline quota in Year 2, and no quota will be transferred to the Reserve category for that year.

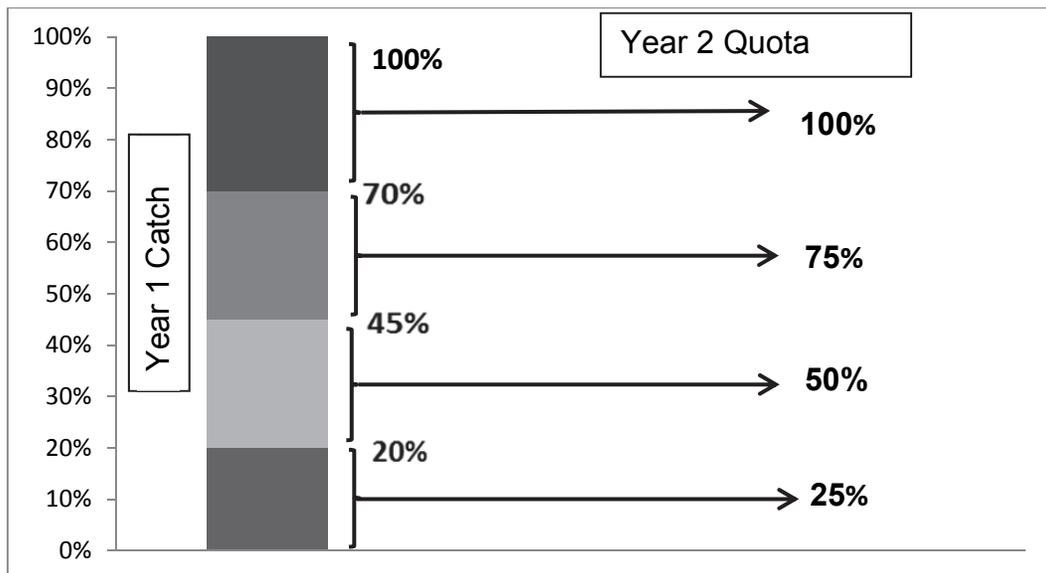


Figure 1. Annual Reallocation: Relationship between Individual Vessel's Year 1 Catch and Year 2 Quota

Table 1. Annual Reallocation of Bluefin Quota from Purse Seine Participants (under the current Purse Seine quota of 159.1 mt; five purse seine participants receive 31.8 mt each)

Year 1	Year 2		
Amount of Purse Seine Base Quota <i>Caught</i> by Purse Seine Participant	Amount of Purse Seine Base Quota <i>Allocated</i> to Purse Seine Participant	Amount of Purse Seine Base Quota <i>Reallocated</i> to the Reserve category per Participant	Maximum Amount of Total Purse Seine Base Quota <i>Reallocated</i> to the Reserve category
0 to 6.4 mt (0 to 20%)	8 mt 25% (minimum quota)	23.8 mt 75%	119 mt 75%
>6.4 to 14.3 mt (>20% to 45%)	15.9 mt 50%	15.9 mt 50%	79.5 mt 50%
>14.3 to 22.3 mt (>45% to 70%)	23.8 mt 75%	8 mt 25%	40 mt 25%
>22.3 to 31.8 mt (>70% to 100%)	31.8 mt 100%	0 mt 0%	0 mt 0%

- The Purse Seine category catch levels and allocation levels have been staggered to allow for an increase in allocation in the following year, without causing the participant to exceed the current year’s allocation to do so.
- NMFS will annually estimate the purse seine catch for that year and publish a notice in the Federal Register regarding the amount of quota that would be allocated to the Purse Seine category participants, as well as the corresponding amount allocated to the Reserve category and any disposition of the quota from the Reserve category for the subsequent year made at that time.
- After the initial adjustment, NMFS may make additional modifications, inseason, to the Purse Seine category quota in accordance with the criteria for inseason adjustments specified at §635.27(a), or make subsequent use of quota from the Reserve category, if warranted.

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements

- Vessels with an Atlantic Tunas Purse Seine category permit must have an approved Enhanced Mobile Transmitting Unit (E-MTU) VMS unit installed by a qualified marine electrician in order to fish with purse seine gear. The VMS hardware and communications service provider must be on the VMS type approval lists for use in HMS fisheries, which is available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/docs/2014/noaa_fisheries_service_type_final_020514.pdf.
 - Vessels must follow the procedures for installation and activation provided by NMFS and submit to NMFS the completed checklist and compliance certification statement.
- The VMS unit must submit automatic position reports every hour, 24 hours a day, unless a valid power down exemption has been granted by NMFS law enforcement.

- Purse Seine category participants may request a documented power down exemption from NMFS law enforcement if the vessel will not be fishing for an extended period of time. The request must describe:
 - the reason an exemption is being requested;
 - the location of the vessel during the time an exemption is sought;
 - the exact time period for which an exemption is needed; and
 - sufficient information to determine that a power down exemption is appropriate.
- If a vessel operator is aware that transmission of automatic position reports has been interrupted, or is notified by NMFS that such reports are not being received, the vessel operator must contact NMFS and follow the instructions given.
 - After a fishing trip during which interruption of automatic position reports has occurred, the vessel's owner or operator must have a qualified marine electrician replace or repair the VMS unit prior to the vessel's next trip.
- As a condition of obtaining an HMS limited access permit, the vessel owners or operators must allow NMFS, the USCG, or their designees access to the vessel's position data.

On each trip to fish for Atlantic tunas with purse seine gear:

- **Hail out:** Prior to departing on a trip, vessels must submit a "Highly Migratory Species Trip Declaration Form" through E-MTU VMS to:
 - declare their intent to fish for Atlantic tunas with purse seine gear, and
 - note their HMS target species.
- **Catch reports:** Vessels must submit through VMS, a "Highly Migratory Species Bluefin Tuna Catch Report," for each set. Specifically, such vessels must:
 - report the number of all bluefin discarded dead or retained (by standardized size ranges) within 12 hours of completion of each set (including reporting of zero bluefin on a set).
- **Hail in:** At least three hours and no more than 12 hours in advance of landing, the vessel operator must provide advanced notice of landing, by submitted the "Highly Migratory Species Pre-Landing Notification Form" with information on the time and location of landing.
- **Declare out:** If a vessel operator decides not to fish for or retain HMS for two or more trips, the operator may choose to "declare out" of the fishery, according to instructions provided by NMFS, and would not be subject to the HMS hail in / hail out requirements during trips for which they are declared out of the HMS fishery.
- NMFS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) will provide vessel owners with instructions regarding the detailed methods of reporting such information using their VMS units.
- For questions regarding VMS, please contact OLE Southeast Division at 1-800-758-4833 or 727-824-5334.

Purse Seine category fishing year start date

- 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.

Other New Management Measures

Atlantic Tuna Purse Seine category participants should be aware of the following new regulations. Regulations are effective January 1, 2015, unless otherwise noted.

- The codified reallocation measure will maintain the Purse Seine category allocation of 18.6% of the U.S. quota, but then reduce the quota by 12.7 mt. Codified reallocation measures are expected to result in an annual Purse Seine category quota of 159.1 mt for 2015 (subject to change due to inseason adjustments and ICCAT recommendations).
- NMFS may augment the amount of quota in the Reserve category; there are new criteria in the list of determination criteria NMFS considers in redistributing quota to or from the Reserve category.

For more information about all aspects of Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP, please see the final rule for Amendment 7 and the Amendment 7 Compliance Guide (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/documents/fmp/am7/index.html>) 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