Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Management

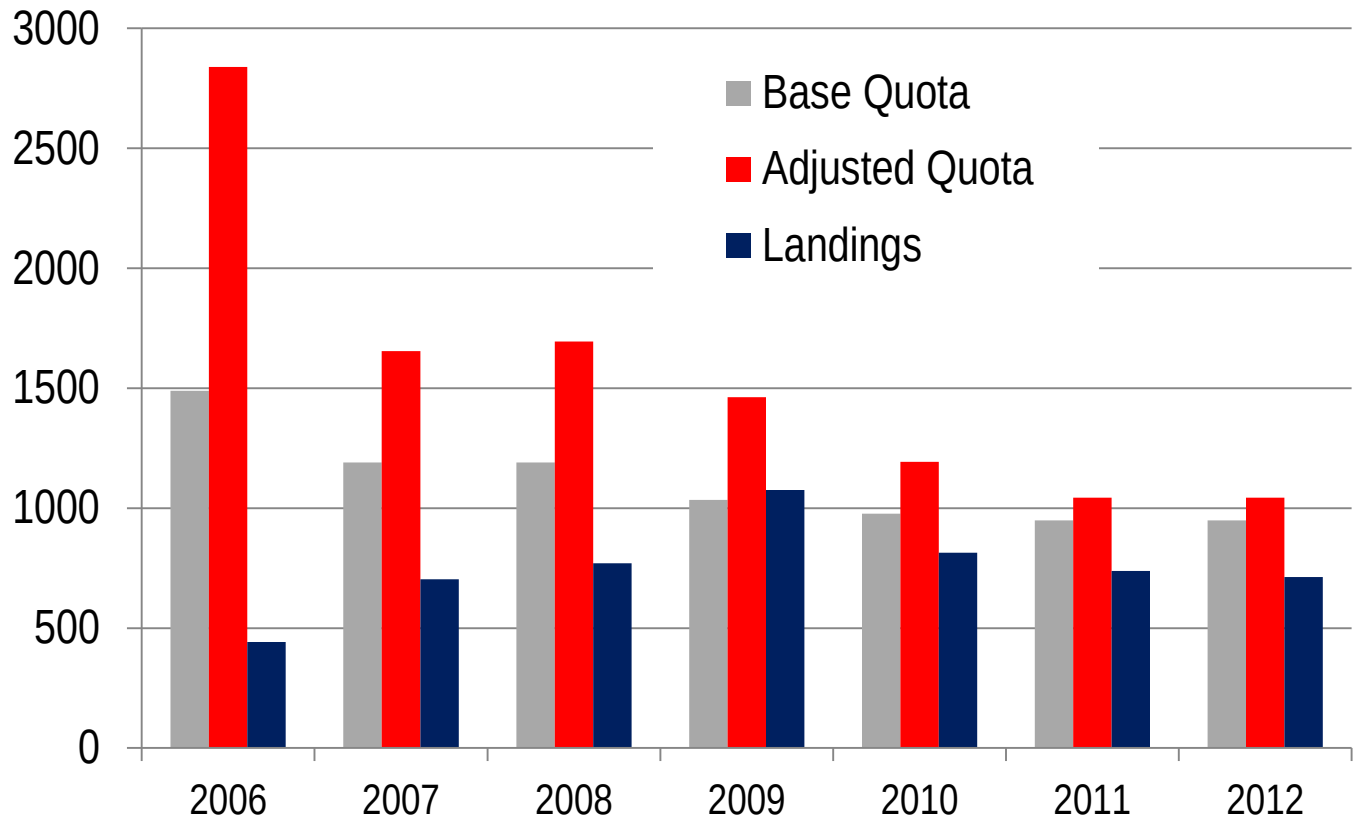
Draft Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Fishery Management Plan

August 2013

Bluefin Tuna – Quota Management History

- Catch limited by overall quota –set by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
- 1999: 7 quota categories established based on historical landings, and a separate ICCAT allowance for dead discards (68 mt)
- 2006:
  - Elimination of 68 mt dead discard allowance; countries must account for dead discards within their quota allocations
  - Amount of underharvest than can be carried forward reduced from 100% to 50%
- 2010: Carryforward reduced from 50% to 10% (of initial quota)

Bluefin Tuna Quota and Landings

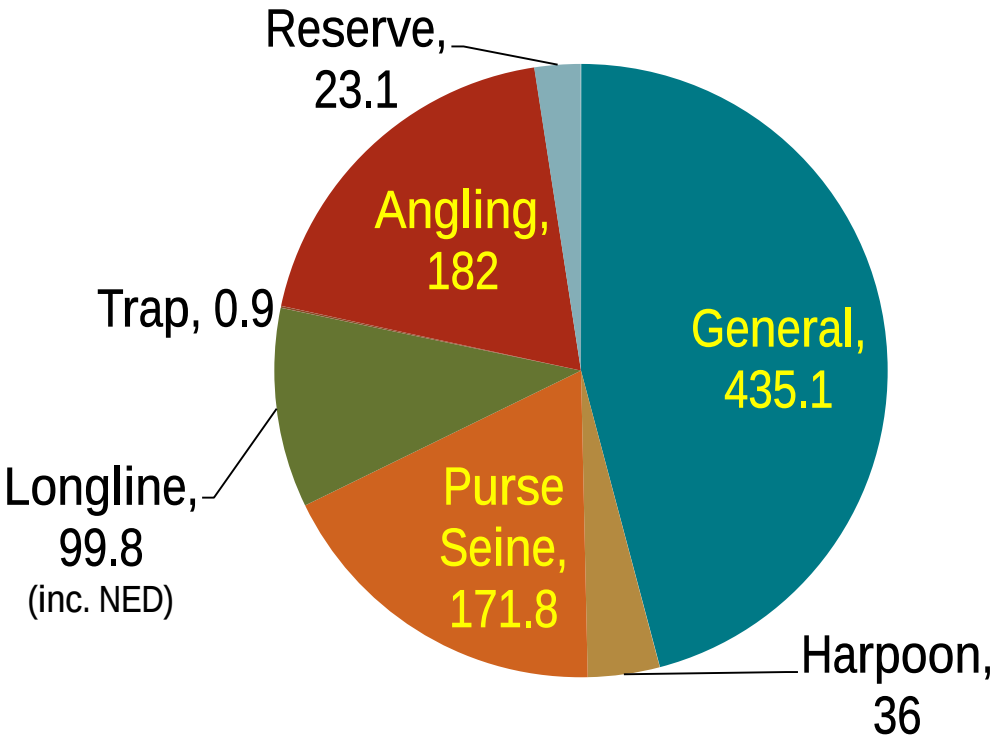


U.S. base quotas for 2006 - 2012 shown as grey bars in relation to recent landings (blue bars) and adjusted quotas (red bars).

Bluefin Category Quotas (2012)

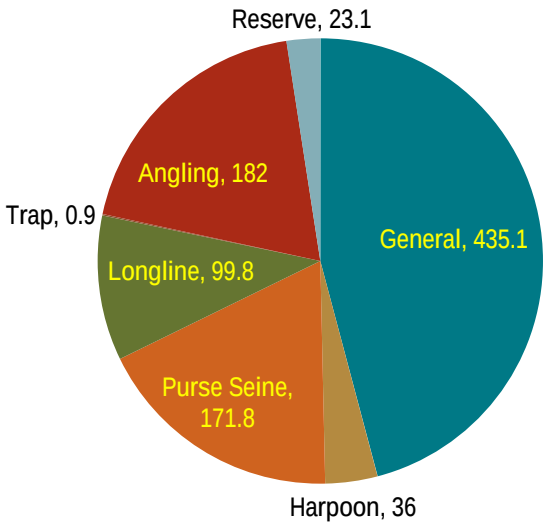
Base Quota – 948.7 mt

(923.7 mt plus 25 mt NED set-aside)

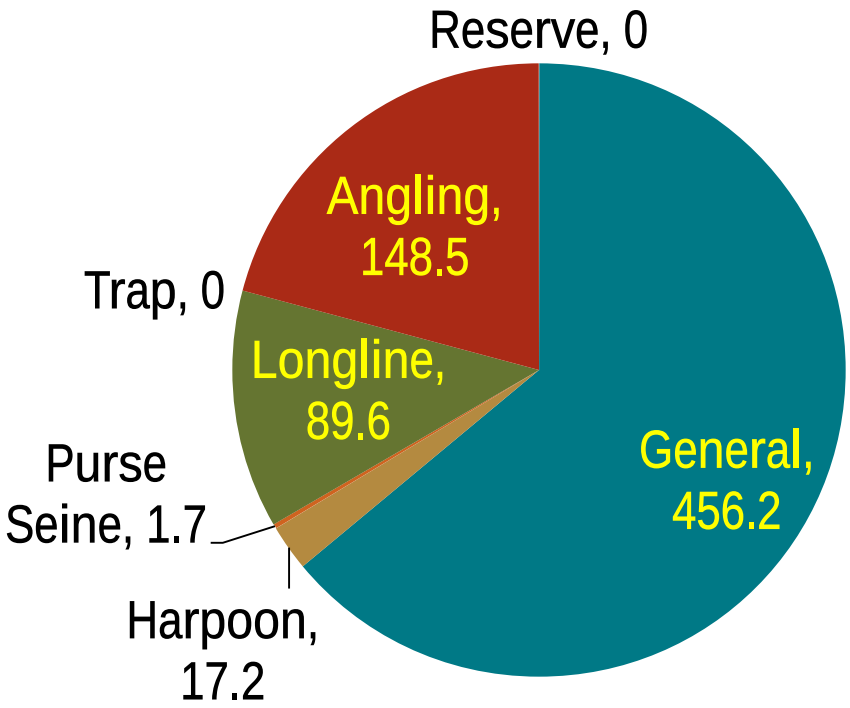


Bluefin Category Quotas and Landings (2012)

Base Quota
(948.7 mt)

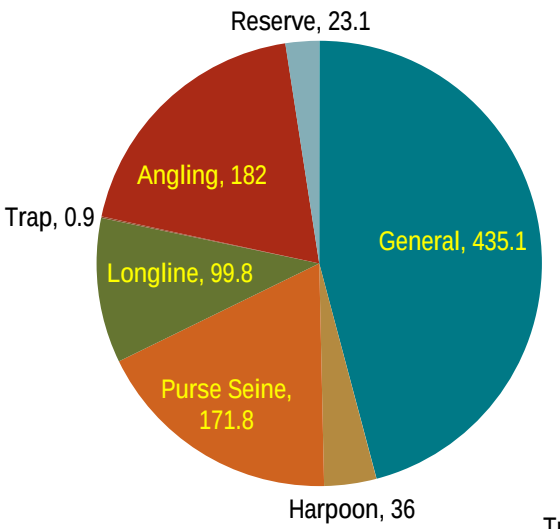


Landings
(713.2 mt)

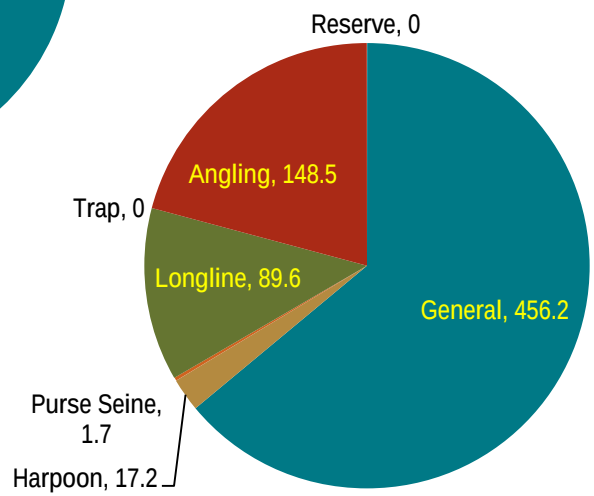


Bluefin Quotas, Landings, and Dead Discards(2012)

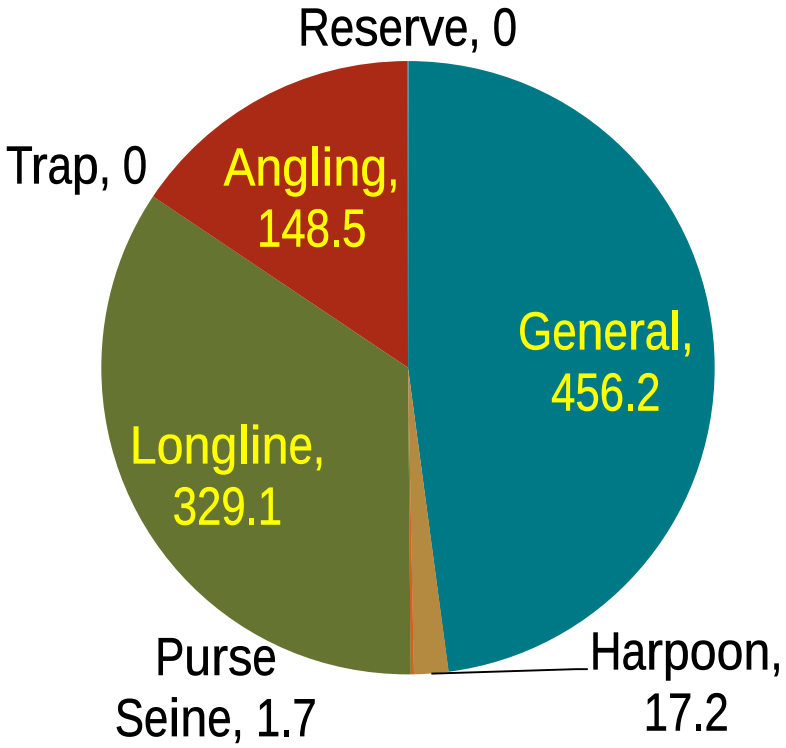
Base Quota
(948.7 mt)



Landings
(713.2 mt)



Landings and Dead Discards (952.7 mt)



Summary of Current Situation

- Difficult to account for mortality, and limited dead discard information
- Too many BFT interactions resulting in dead discards (~21% of 2012 catch)
- FMP quota allocation percentages do not take into account recent changes in ICCAT recommendations or recent trends in fishery
- Longline category vessels may continue to fish when their incidental bluefin quota is attained (but may no longer retain bluefin), resulting in continuing discards.

Amendment 7 Objectives

- Prevent overfishing and rebuild bluefin tuna, achieve on a continuing basis optimum yield, and minimize bluefin bycatch to the extent practicable by ensuring that domestic bluefin tuna fisheries continue to operate within the overall TAC set by ICCAT consistent with the existing rebuilding plan

- Optimize the ability for all permit categories to harvest full bluefin quota; account for mortality and associated discarded bluefin in all categories; maintain flexibility of quota management to account for the highly variable nature of the bluefin fishery from year-to-year; and maintain fairness among permit/quota categories

Amendment 7 objectives - continued

- Reduce incidental interactions of bluefin and minimize reductions in target catch in both directed and incidental bluefin fisheries, to the extent practicable

- Improve the timeliness and quality of catch data through enhanced reporting and monitoring to ensure that landings and dead discards do not exceed the quota and to improve accounting for all sources of fishing mortality

- Adjust other aspects of the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP as necessary and appropriate

Overview of Proposed Management Measures

- Reallocate quota among categories, adjusting quotas based on historical dead discard allowance
- Reduce pelagic longline bluefin interactions with gear restricted areas
- Increase accountability and create strong incentives to avoid bluefin with individual bluefin quotas for pelagic longline fishermen
- Improve quality and timeliness of catch data with enhanced reporting requirements for commercial quota categories
- Optimize fishing opportunity with adjustments to General and Harpoon category quota rules
- Implement other measures (e.g., northern albacore quota)

Objectives of Proposed Quota Reallocation Measures

- Account for bluefin mortality within the Longline category quota
- Reduce uncertainty in annual quota category allocation and accounting
- Optimize fishing opportunity by increasing management flexibility of the bluefin quota system
- Ensure that the various quota categories are regulated fairly in relation to one another

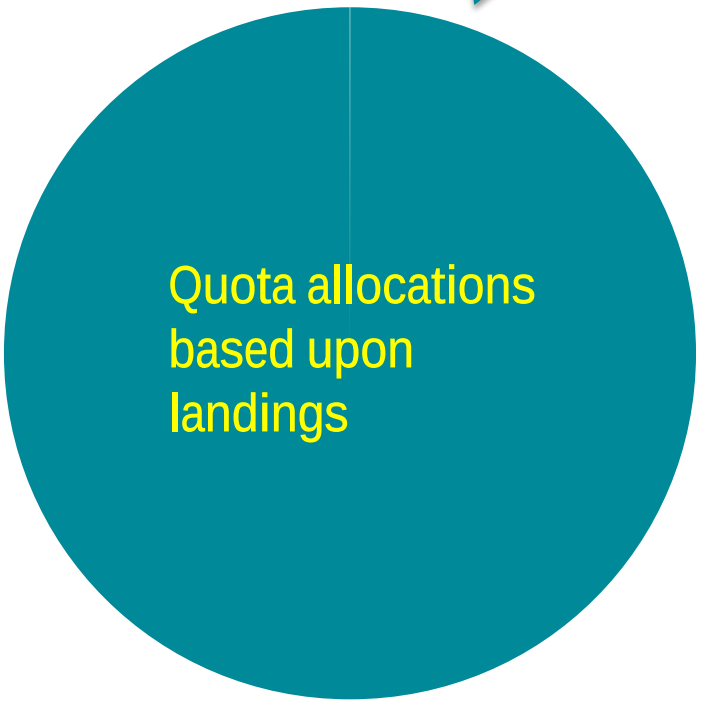
Proposed Quota Reallocation Measures

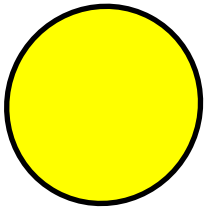
1) Codified Reallocation: Quota percentages for all quota categories remain the same, but every year, each quota category is adjusted by a codified amount of quota to the Longline category to account for bluefin mortality.
2) Annual Reallocation: 25% of the Purse Seine category bluefin base quota would be guaranteed to be available to Purse Seine category. Base quota projected to be unused (based on a formula, using the previous year's landings and dead discards data), would be reallocated to the Reserve category annually.
3) Modify Reserve Category: Allow increases to current baseline allocation of 2.5 percent and expand considerations in making adjustments to/from the Reserve category:

→ Predictability and Flexibility

Codified Reallocation (to Longline category)

Historical Basis: Quota Allocation & Dead Discard Allowance



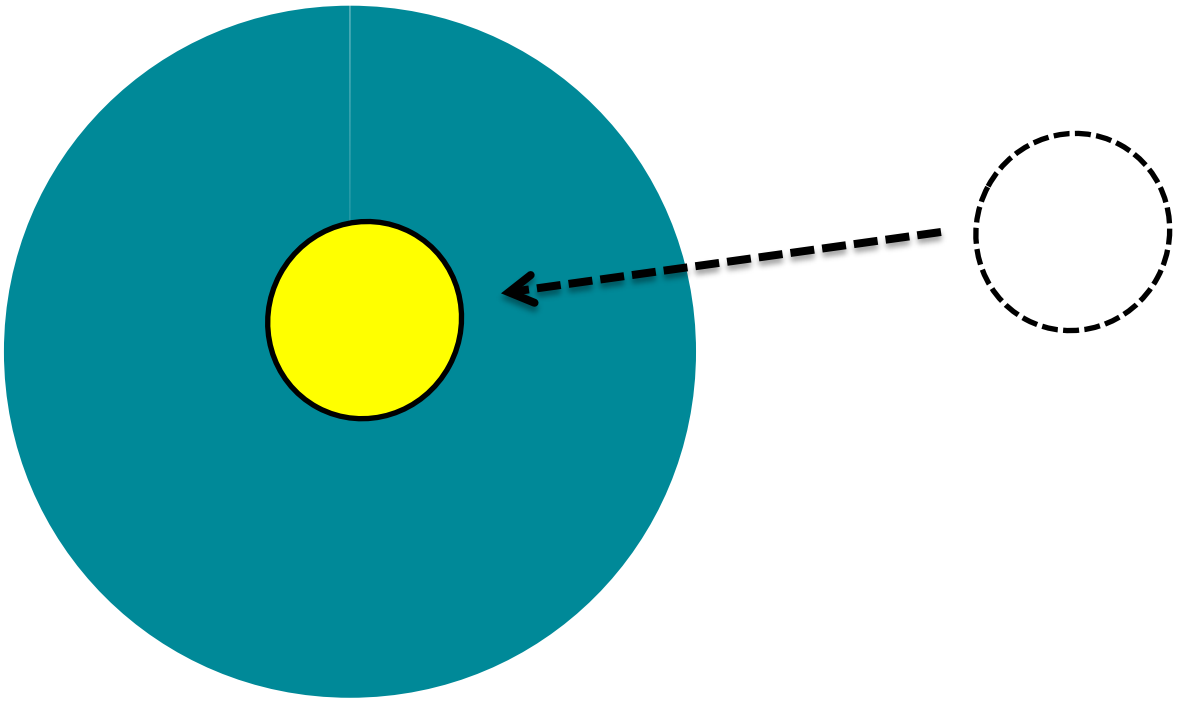


68 mt

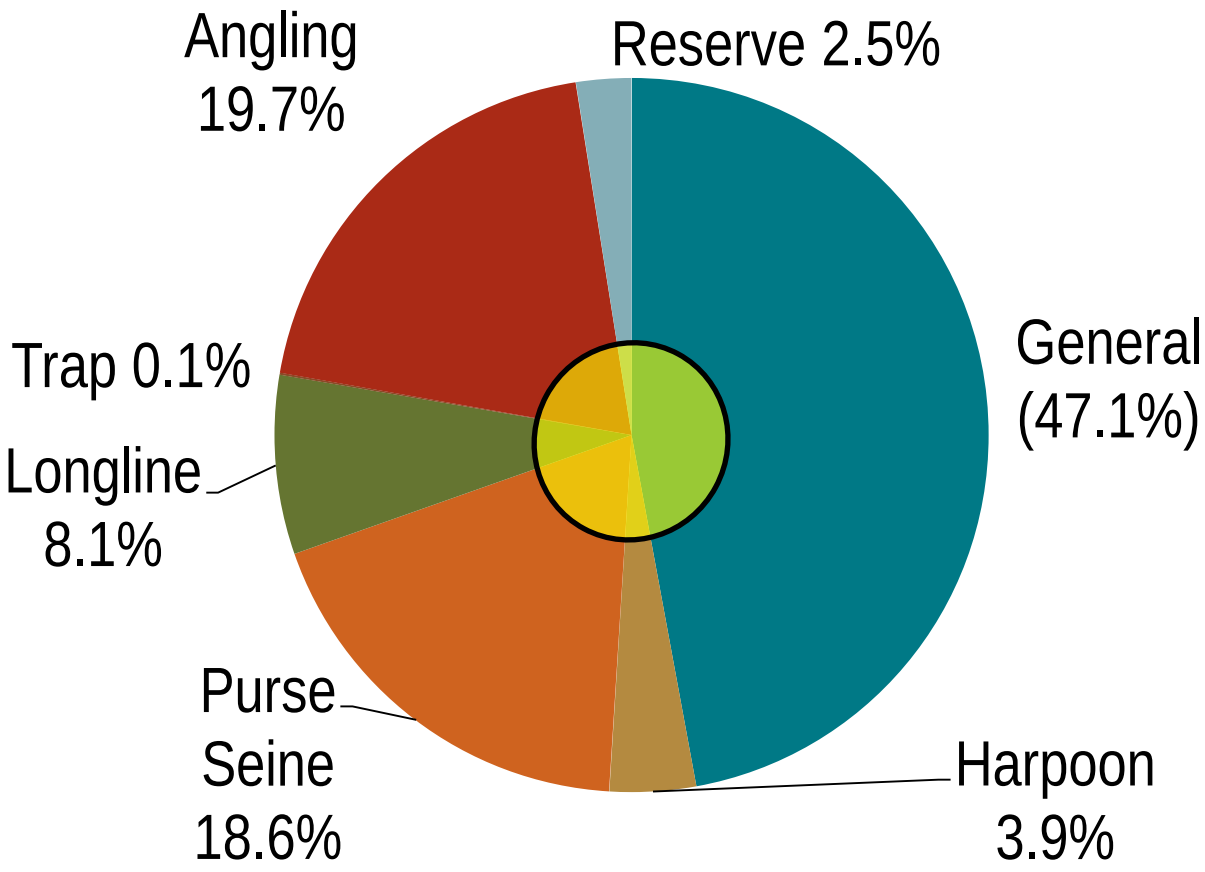
Separate Dead Discard Allowance Discontinued in 2006

Codified Reallocation (to Longline category)

Proposed: Derive 68 mt from all quota categories



Codified Reallocation (to Longline category)



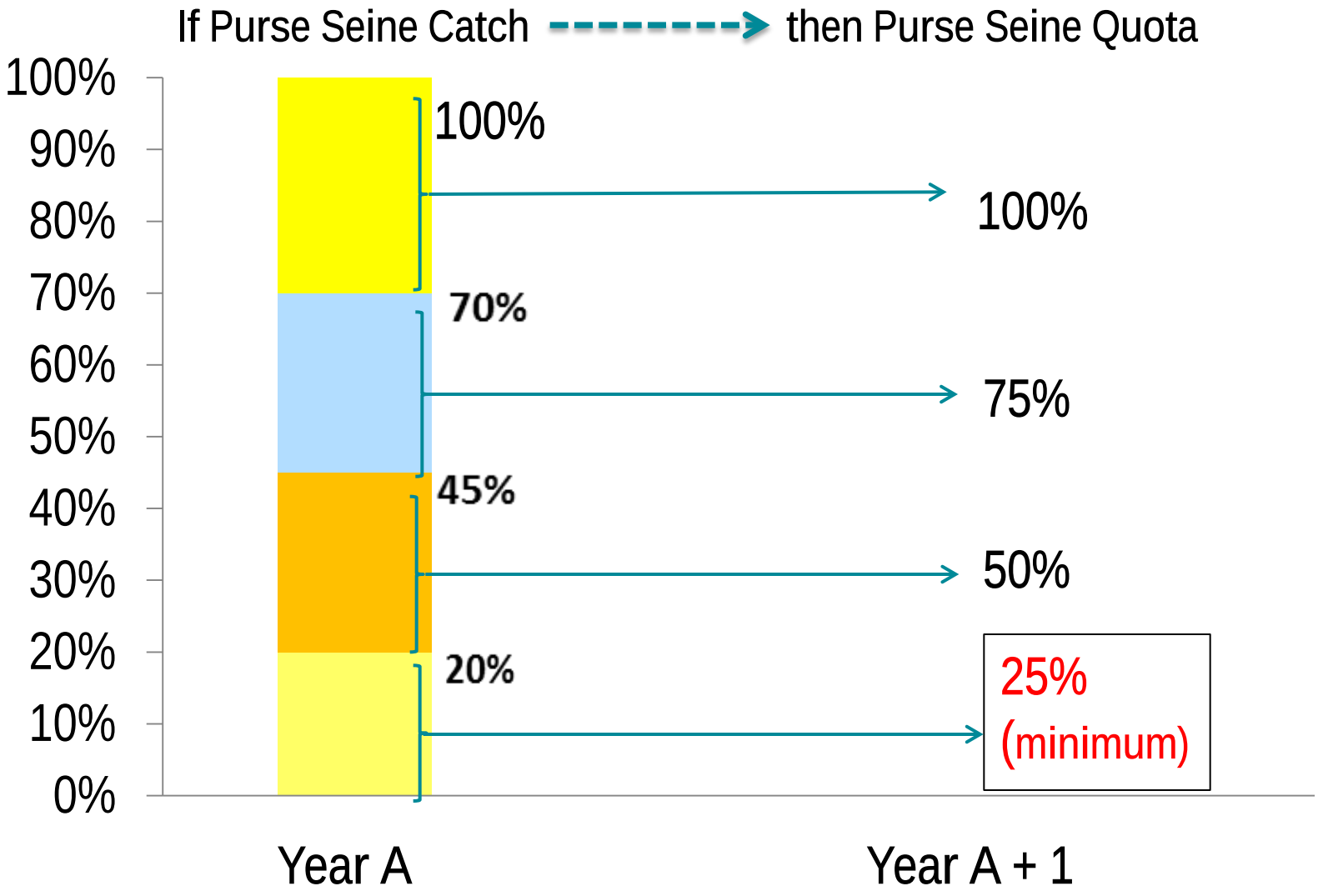
Codified Reallocation (68 mt to Longline category*)

No change to current percentage allocations, but each category quota would be adjusted by a codified amount that would go to Longline category:

Category	Quota %	Amount (mt) from each Category	Example (mt)	
			2013 Base Quota	With proposed reallocation
General	47.1	32.1	435.1	403.0
Harpoon	3.9	2.6	36.0	33.4
Purse Seine	18.6	12.7	171.8	159.1
Longline	8.1	5.5	74.8	*137.3
Trap	0.1	0.1	0.9	0.9
Angling	19.7	13.4	182.0	168.6
Reserve	2.5	1.7	23.1	21.4
Total to Longline Category		*68 mt		

*Net increase of 62.5 mt to Longline category (also responsible for part of the 68 mt)

Annual Reallocation from Purse Seine Category



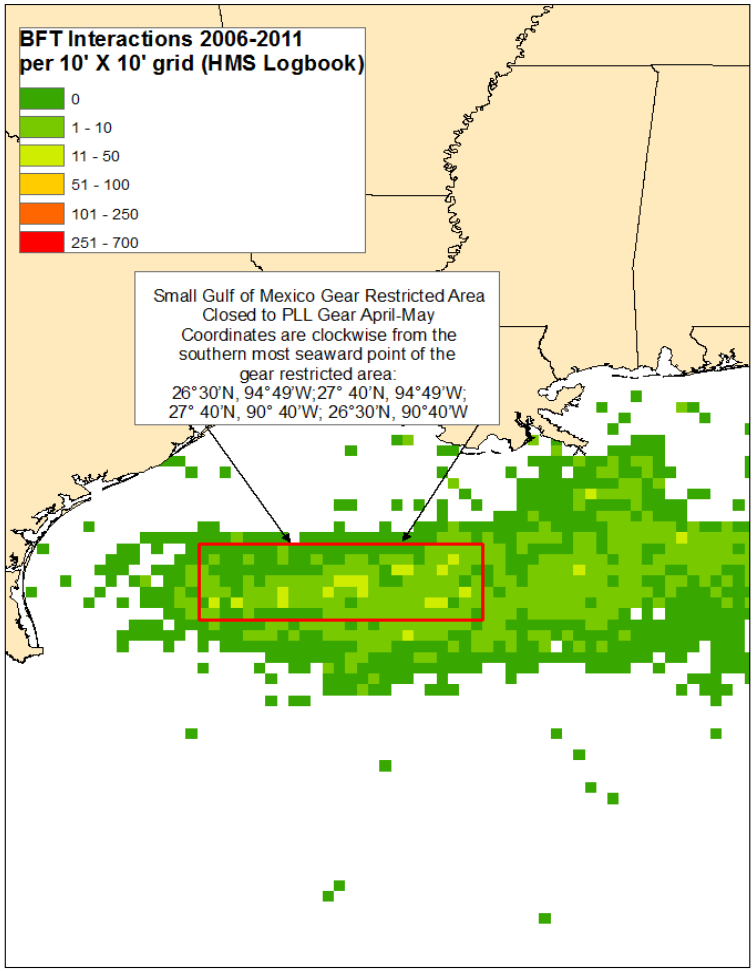
Annual Reallocation from Purse Seine Category

Quota *Caught* by Purse Seine Category in Year X*	Quota *Allocated* to Purse Seine Category in Year (X + 1)*	Quota *Available for Reallocation* to other Categories in Year (X + 1)
0 to 20%	25% (minimum quota)	75%
>20% to 45%	50%	50%
>45% to 70%	75%	25%
>70% to 100%	100%	0%
Example: 45% (77.3 mt)	50% (85.9 mt)	50% (85.9 mt)

* % calculated based on base Purse Seine quota

Gulf of Mexico Gear Restricted Area (GRA)

Closed to fishing with Pelagic Longline Gear: April & May

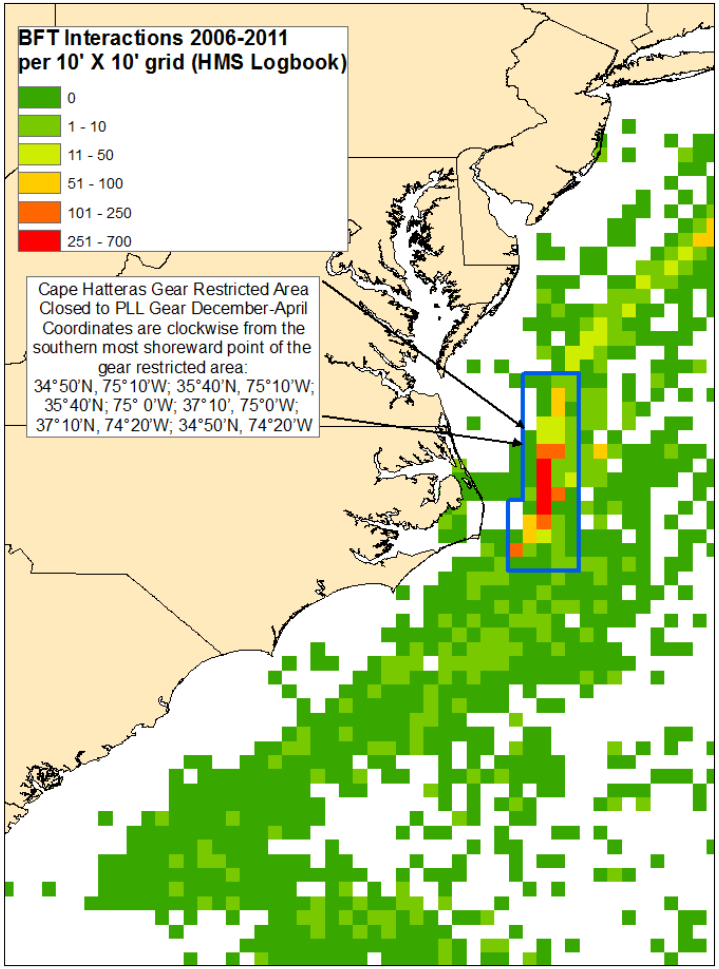


Would reduce bluefin catch in Gulf of Mexico (kept and discarded) by 20%.
Would reduce bluefin catch overall by 3%.

Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area (GRA)

Dec. through April: *Conditional Access* for some Pelagic Longline vessels;

18 vessels would not have access



Would reduce the bluefin discards in the Atlantic by 77% (# of fish), and would reduce the bluefin discards overall by 29%.

Cape Hatteras GRA (Dec. through Apr.): Conditional access based on past vessel performance – 3 "performance metrics"

1) Bluefin interactions

Ratio of bluefin interactions to designated species landings (swordfish, yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, albacore, skipjack, dolphin, wahoo, and porbeagle, shortfin mako, and thresher sharks)

2) Compliance with the Pelagic Observer Program (POP) requirements

Multiple aspects: Communications, and timing of those communications, with POP; presence/absence of a USCG safety decal; life raft capacity, bunk space, vessel selection and observer deployment

3) Compliance with HMS Logbook reporting requirements

Timeliness of logbook submission

Cape Hatteras GRA (Dec. through Apr.) – continued (18 vessels without access in year one as proposed)

- Access eligibility would be evaluated annually, based on performance metrics for the most recent three years of data. Vessels would be "qualified" or "not qualified."

- Longline category vessels "not qualified" to fish in the Cape Hatteras GRA would be allowed to use authorized hand gear in the Cape Hatteras GRA under General category rules as specified. Bluefin tuna landed in this way would count against the General category quota. Such vessels would be required to declare into the GRA via VMS

Conditional Access to Current Closed Areas (pelagic longline vessels)

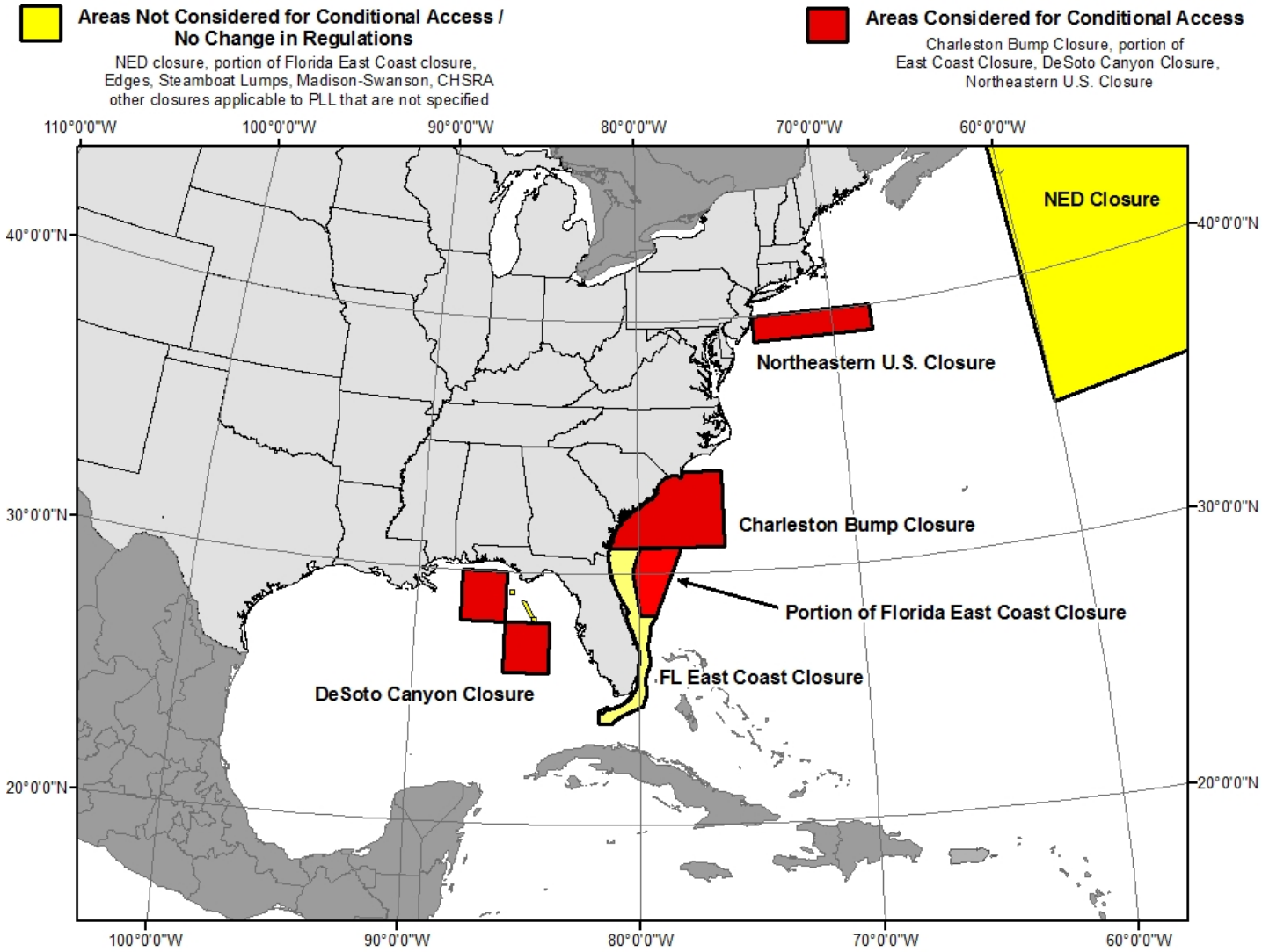
- Objectives: provide commercial data to evaluate closed areas; provide fishing opportunity for pelagic longline vessels

- Charleston Bump closed area; *a portion of* the East Florida Coast closed area*; the DeSoto Canyon closed area; and the Northeastern U.S. closed area (June). * north of 28° 17' 10" North latitude, east of the 100-fathom curve

- Using the same performance metrics, "Qualified" vessels may fish in these closed areas, provided:

- Vessel is selected for an observer during that quarter, in the same geographic area as the closed area
- Trip is observed
- Bluefin catch (and/or protected species interactions) are reported daily via VMS

Conditional Access to Current Closed Areas (pelagic longline vessels)



NMFS Termination of Access to Current Closed Areas

- NMFS can terminate access to the area for all pelagic longline vessels via inseason action to address issues including:

(1) Inability to achieve or effectively balance the objective of reducing bluefin interactions with the objective of providing fishing opportunity;

(2) bycatch of bluefin tuna or other HMS species that may be inconsistent with the objectives/regulations of the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP, or ICCAT recommendations; or

(3) Interactions with marine mammals or protected species that is inconsistent with the Marine Mammal Protection Act or the Endangered Species Act.

Transiting Closed and Restricted Areas

- Current regulations do not allow fishermen to stow their longline gear and transit closed areas. Instead, fishermen must go around the areas.

- Would allow vessels with an Atlantic Tunas Longline permit, Swordfish Incidental or Directed Limited Access permit, and/or a Shark Limited Access permit fishing with bottom or pelagic longline gear to transit areas that are otherwise closed or restricted to such gear

- Must remove and stow the gangions, hooks, and buoys from the mainline and drum. No baited hooks would be allowed.

Individual Bluefin Quotas (IBQ) for Pelagic Longline Fleet: Objectives

- Limit bluefin landings and dead discards with a hard cap;
- Provide strong incentives to avoid bluefin tuna interactions;
- Provide flexibility to enable pelagic longline vessels to lease some bluefin quota from other vessels;
- Balance the objectives of IBQ program with other Amendment 7 objectives, (e.g., optimize fishing opportunities, maintain flexibility of the regulations to account for the highly variable nature of the bluefin fishery, and consider the broader objectives of the FMP).

IBQ Program Overview

- Quota shares allotted to active PLL vessels. Each share would represent a set percentage of the Longline category quota. Based on that percentage, the vessel would also receive an annual Quota allocation (mt of bluefin)

- Quota shares and related allocation use would be regional (Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic). Atlantic shares may not be used in the Gulf of Mexico.

- Vessels would need a minimum amount of quota allocation to depart on a fishing trip with pelagic longline gear
  - Atlantic minimum required: 0.125 mt whole weight (~275 lb)
  - Gulf of Mexico minimum required: 0.25 mt whole weight (~550 lb)

- Landings and dead discards count toward the IBQ

IBQ Program Overview - continued

- If a vessel catches more bluefin than the amount of bluefin allocation it has, it may finish the trip and land the bluefin, but must then account for the bluefin landed by obtaining additional quota allocation through a lease (annual) before another trip can be made.
- Temporary leasing of quota allocation would be available; Leasing quota would be allowed between Purse Seine and Longline category vessels
- Vessels may not depart on a fishing trip w/o sufficient IBQ available
- A vessel's annual quota allocation would not carry over from one year to the next
- Permitted Longline category vessels that are not allocated bluefin shares may lease quota

Measures Associated with the IBQ Program

Reduce Dead Discards and Optimize Fishing Opportunity

- NMFS closure of longline fishery
- Elimination of target catch requirement
- Mandatory retention of legal sized dead bluefin

Other Elements of IBQ Program

- Appeals of initial quota shares
- Cost recovery
- Review of program after three years

Proposed Method of Determining Which Vessels get IBQ Shares; and How Much (%) each Share is.

- Active vessels get quota shares
- Bluefin tuna quota share (%) would be based on the Quota Share Formula, which has two elements:
    1. A vessel's designated species landings (lb) during the six-year period from 2006 through 2011 (NMFS's weighout slips and vessel logbook data); and
    2. Ratio of bluefin tuna interactions (#) to designated species landings (lb) (logbook)
- 3 types (sizes) of quota shares: high, medium, low

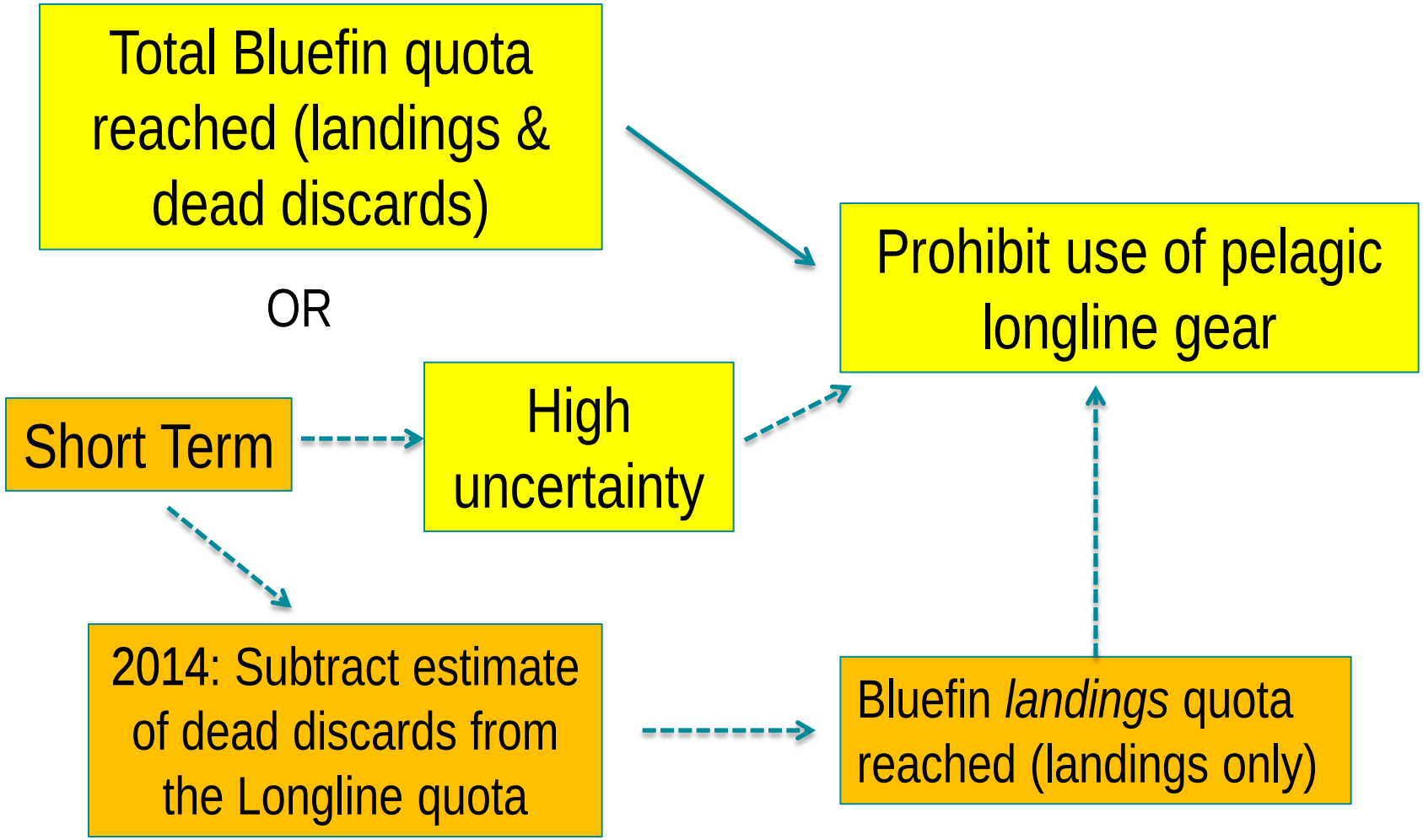
Designated species: yellowfin, bigeye, albacore, and skipjack tunas, swordfish, dolphin, wahoo, and porbeagle, shortfin mako, and thresher sharks.

What percentage of the quota would each share be? How much quota (mt) are the shares equivalent to?

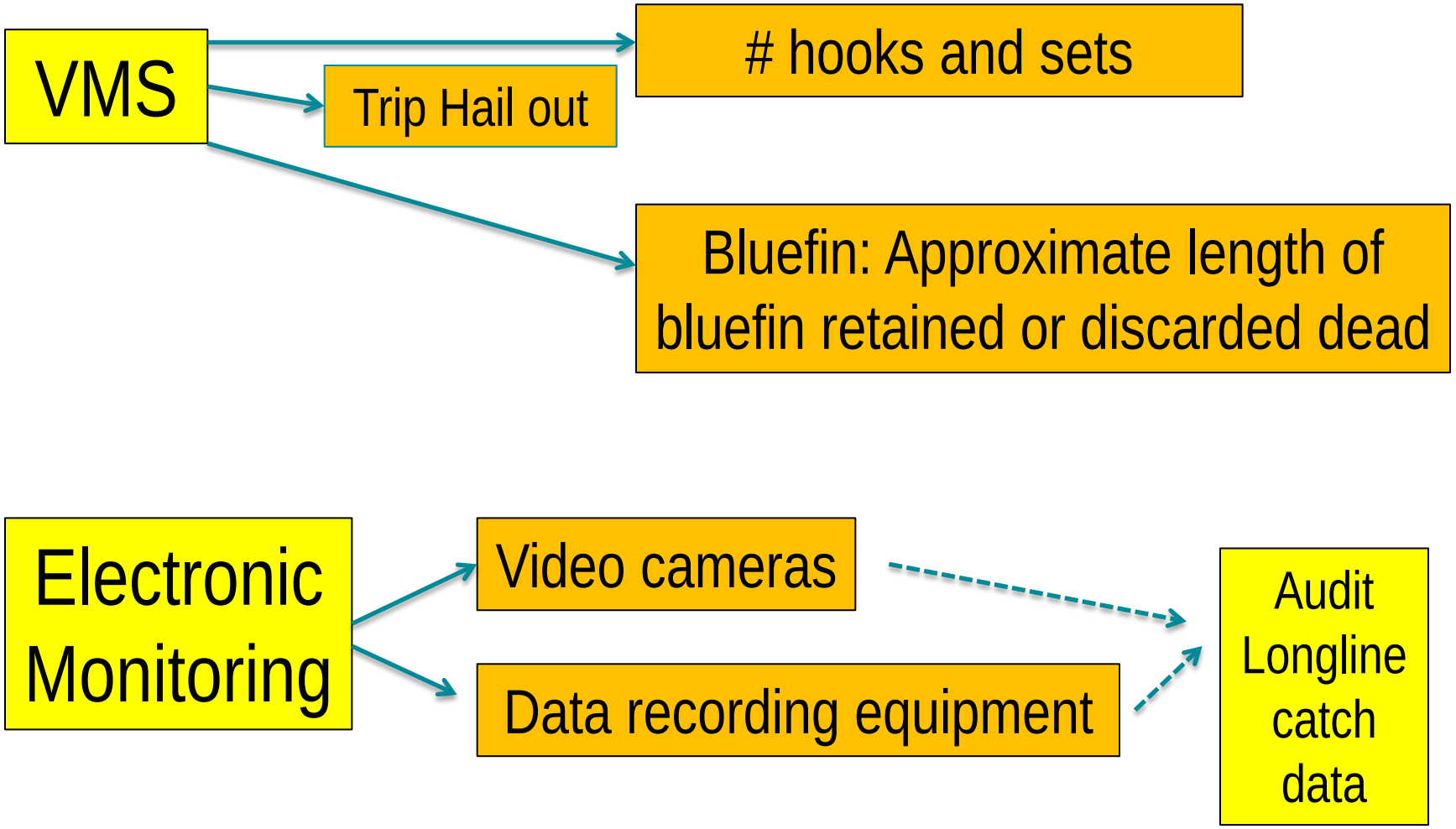
Share Bins	Quota Share	Quota Allocation*
high	1.0 %	1.37 mt
med.	0.54%	0.74 mt
low	0.34%	0.47 mt

* Proposed quota allocations derived from proposed baseline Longline category bluefin quota of 137 mt: (e.g., 1 % of 137 mt = 1.37 mt)

NMFS Closure of the Pelagic Longline Fishery



Enhanced Reporting Requirements Details - Longline



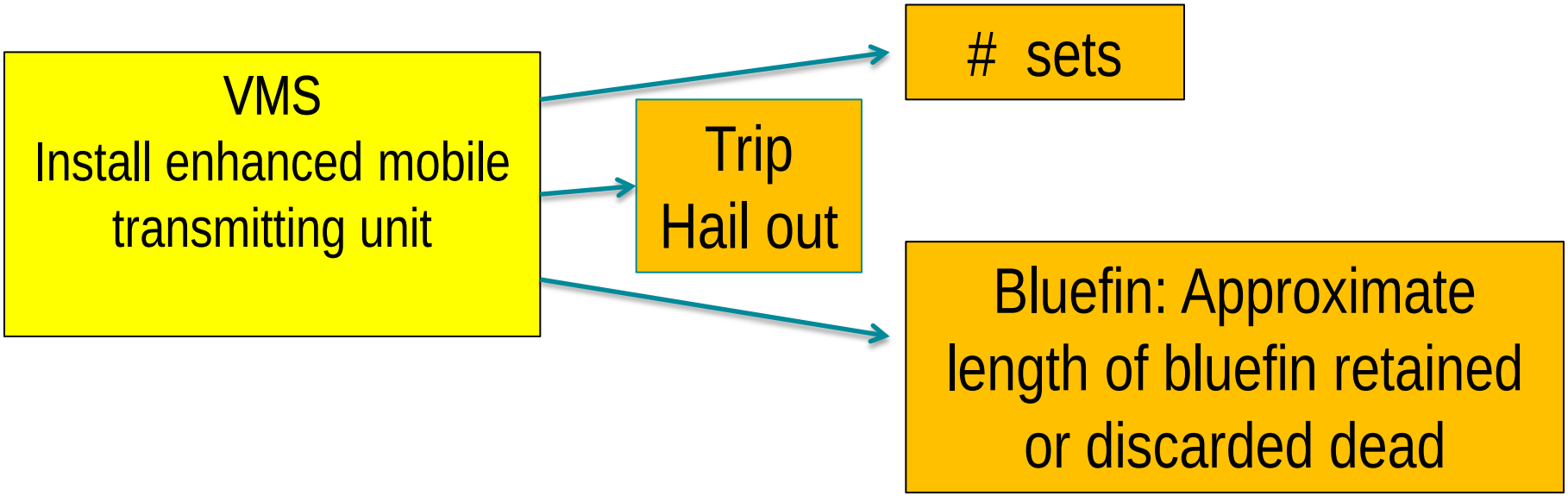
Electronic monitoring requirements would be fully implemented in 2015

Electronic Monitoring - Overview

➢ Objectives:

- Verify the accuracy of counts and identification of bluefin tuna reported by the vessel owner/operator, as well as observers (audit data)
- Collect video image and fishing effort data that may be used in conjunction with other sources of information to estimate bluefin tuna dead discards
- Augment the ability of an observer to fulfill their duties by providing a record of catch during the time periods the observer may be unable to observe the catch directly

Enhanced Reporting Requirements Details – Purse Seine



Report # sets within 12 hours of completion of the set.
For Purse Seine sets with bluefin tuna catch the VMS report must be submitted within 12 hours of completion of the set, and reporting of zero bluefin on a set is not required.

Enhanced Reporting Requirements Details – General, Harpoon, Charter/Headboat

Automated catch reporting system requirement

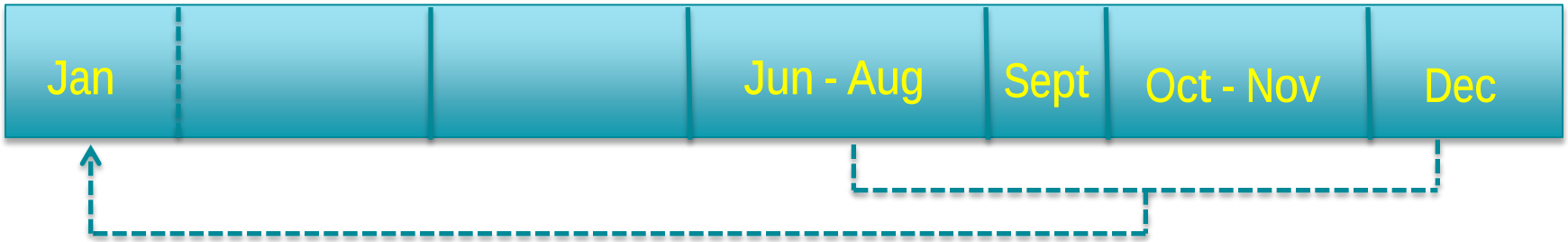
telephone

OR

internet

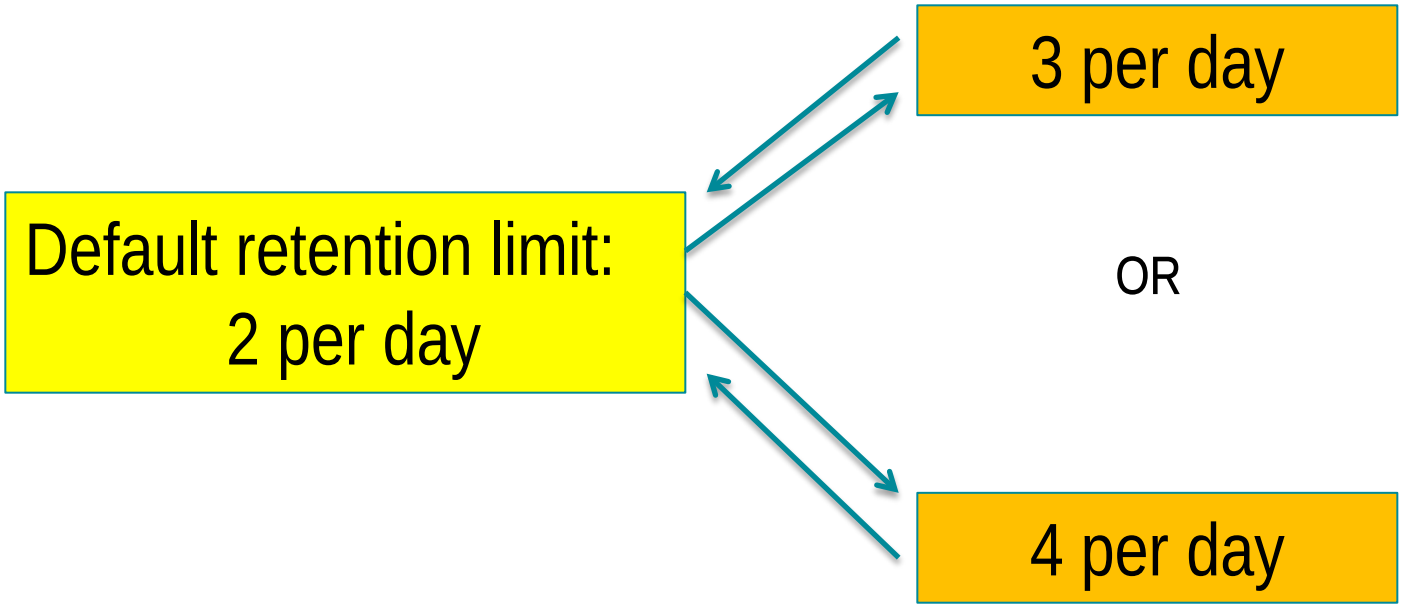
Bluefin: Approximate length of bluefin retained or discarded dead

Additional Flexibility for General Category Quota Adjustment



- Proactively transfer General category quota to January subperiod per regulatory determination criteria

NMFS Authority to Adjust Harpoon Category Retention Limits of Large Medium Bluefin (73 to < 81”)



Limit of Giants (≥ 81”) would remain the same

Angling Category Trophy Subquota Distribution:

Current

North 33.3%

South 66.7%

(south includes Gulf of Mexico)

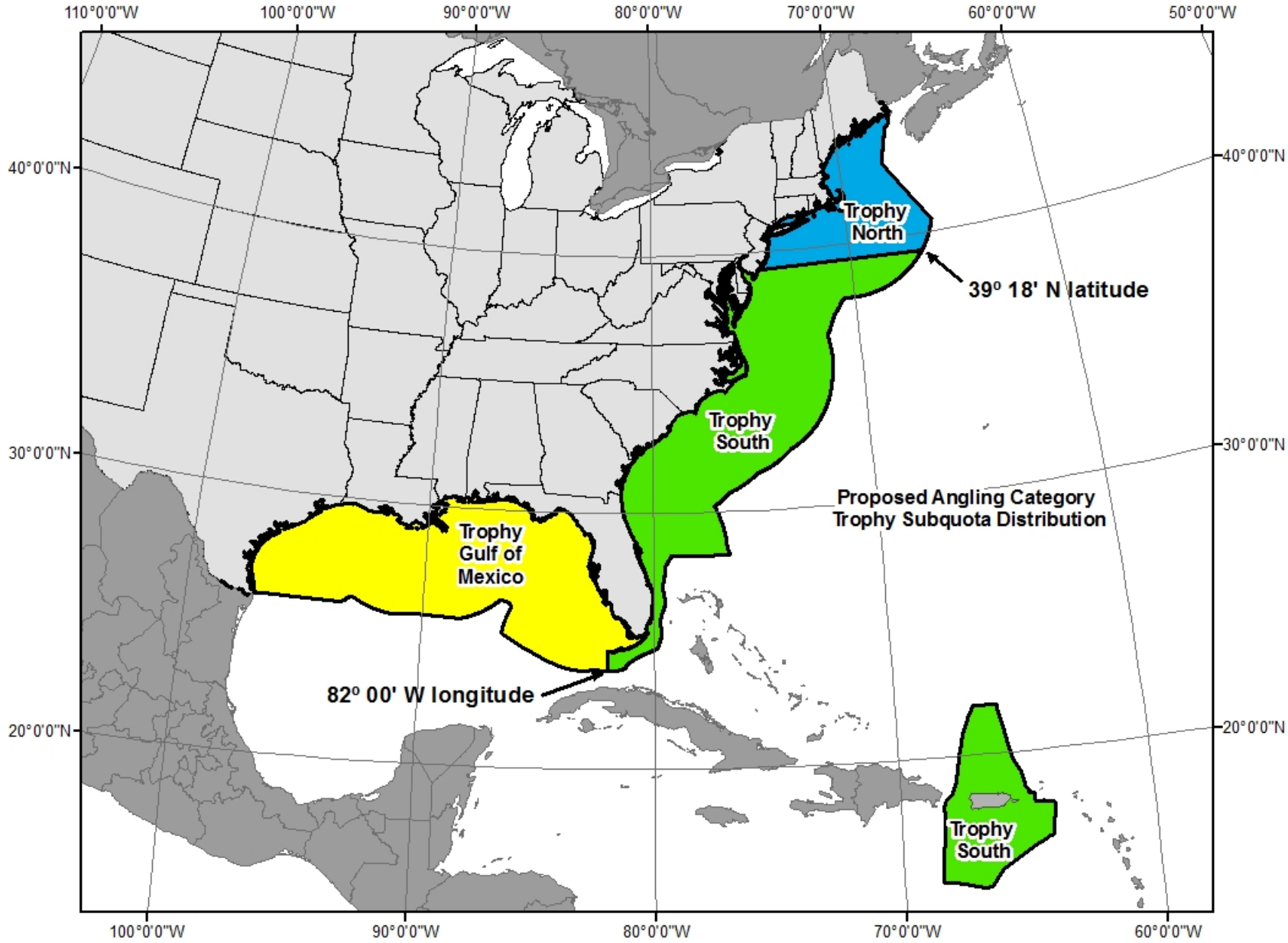
Proposed

North 33.3%

*Gulf of Mexico 33.3%

South 33.3%

* Targeting bluefin in the Gulf of Mexico is prohibited; incidental capture only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40°0'0"N
30°0'0"N
20°0'0"N
Trophy North
39º 18' N latitude
Trophy South
Proposed Angling Category
Trophy Subquota Distribution
Trophy Gulf of Mexico
82º 00' W longitude
Trophy South

Proposed Change the Start Date of the Purse Seine Category

- Current: July 15 (or NMFS may delay until Aug 15)
- Proposed: June 1 (or NMFS may delay until Aug 15)

Modify Rules Regarding Permit Category Changes

- Would allow a vessel owner to modify the category of an Atlantic Tunas or HMS permit issued for up to 45 days from date of issuance, provided the vessel has not landed bluefin tuna as verified via landings data.

North Atlantic Albacore Tuna Quota

- Implement the U.S. annual quota of northern albacore tuna recommended by ICCAT
- Carry-forward of unused quota from one year to the next would be limited to 25 percent of the initial quota
- Account for overharvest and underharvest of the quota adjusted as appropriate for prior year catch, including delayed adjustment (that would skip a year) or adjustments over several years

Amendment 7 - Next Steps

- Comment period – Through October 23, 2013; NMFS conducting public hearings.
- Consider comments, finalize Environmental Impact Statement, publish final rule (estimated for Spring-2014).
- Effective date of most measures: 30 days after final rule publishes
- Effective date of delayed measures (e.g. electronic monitoring for Longline category): January 2015

How to Submit Comments

Send Comments to NMFS until October 23, 2013

- Electronically: http://www.regulations.gov
  "submit a comment" ; "NOAA-NMFS-2013-0101"
- Fax: 978-281-9340, Attn: Tom Warren
- Mail:

  Tom Warren
  Highly Migratory Species Management Division
  NMFS – Northeast Regional Office
  55 Great Republic Drive
  Gloucester, MA 01930

Questions?

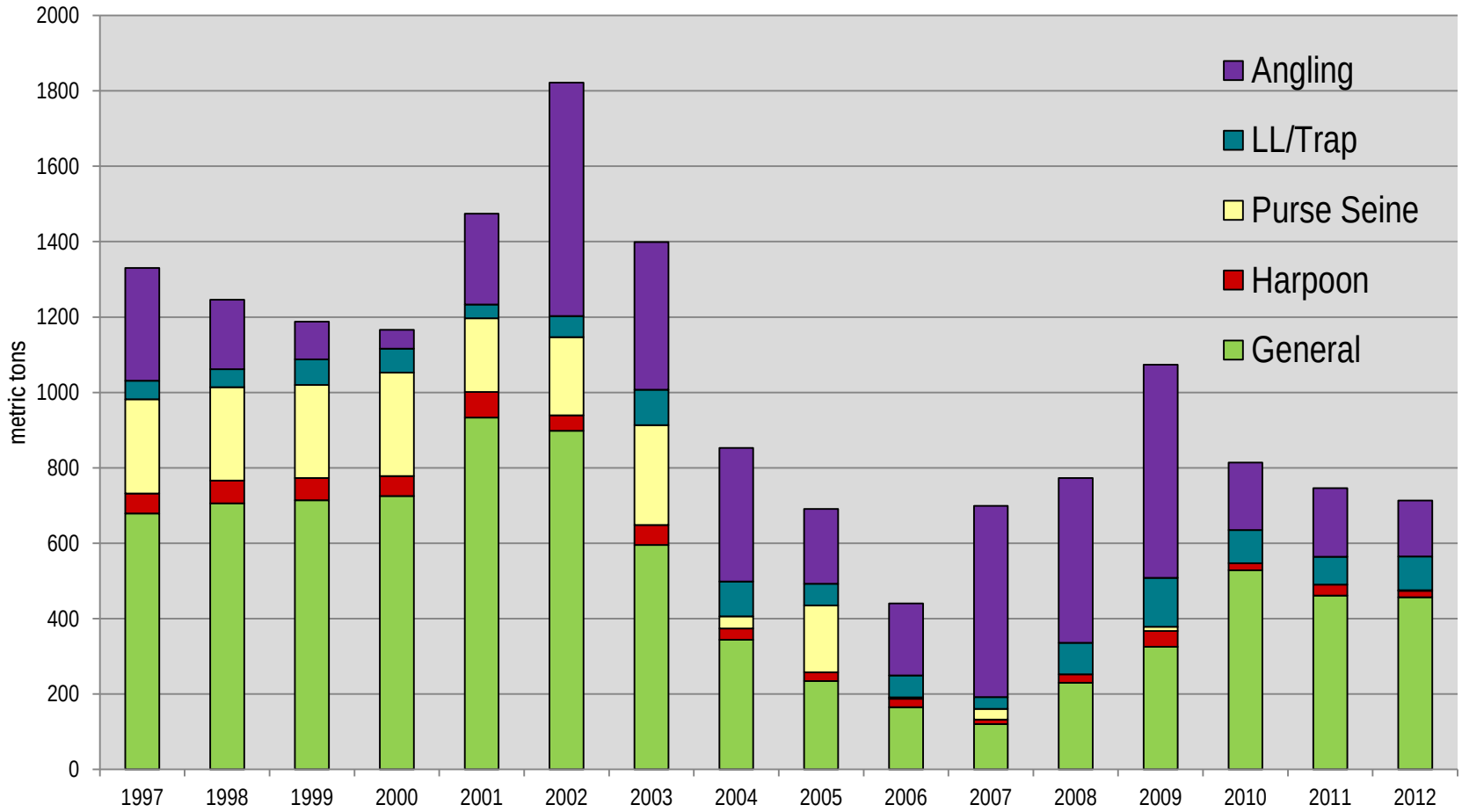
Other Slides

Pelagic Longline Dead Discards 2008 - 2012

	Metric tons (rounded)				
Area	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
NED	5	6	4	5.0	0.5
East Coast ~ “North”	67	120	110	151.7	128.7
GoM ~ “South”	86	78	36	9.5	73.1
Total	158	204	150	166.2	202.3

Updated 2011 data and preliminary 2012 as of 8/15/13

Landings by Category (mt)



Note the decline in General category landings from 2001 through 2007 and the large proportion of Angling category landings 2007 through 2009 (associated with a spike in large school/small medium BFT landings). General category landings grew each year from 2007 through 2010 and decreased in 2011 (but were 95% of the 2011 adjusted General category subquota).

Longline and Trap combined because both are incidental fisheries and data at beginning of time series were combined.