

estimates that the 80 percent limit specified for closure will be exceeded by November 27, 2015. Accordingly, NMFS is closing the commercial non-blacknose SCS management group in the Gulf of Mexico region as of 11:30 p.m. local time December 5, 2015. The only shark species or management groups that remain open in the Gulf of Mexico region are the research large coastal sharks, sandbar sharks within the shark research fishery, the blue shark, and pelagic sharks other than porbeagle or blue shark management groups.

At § 635.27(b)(1), the boundary between the Gulf of Mexico region and the Atlantic region is defined as a line beginning on the East Coast of Florida at the mainland at 25°20.4' N. latitude, proceeding due east. Any water and land to the south and west of that boundary is considered, for the purposes of monitoring and setting quotas, to be within the Gulf of Mexico region.

During the closure, retention of non-blacknose SCS in the Gulf of Mexico region is prohibited for persons fishing aboard vessels issued a commercial shark limited access permit (LAP) under § 635.4. However, persons aboard a commercially permitted vessel that is also properly permitted to operate as a charter vessel or headboat for HMS and is engaged in a for-hire trip could fish under the recreational retention limits for sharks and "no sale" provisions (§ 635.22(a) and (c)).

During this closure, a shark dealer issued a permit pursuant to § 635.4 may not purchase or receive non-blacknose SCS in the Gulf of Mexico region from a vessel issued a shark LAP, except that a permitted shark dealer or processor may possess non-blacknose SCS in the Gulf of Mexico region that were harvested, off-loaded, and sold, traded, or bartered prior to the effective date of the closure and were held in storage consistent with § 635.28(b)(6). Similarly, a shark dealer issued a permit pursuant to § 635.4 may, in accordance with relevant state regulations, purchase or receive non-blacknose SCS in the Gulf of Mexico region if the sharks were harvested, off-loaded, and sold, traded, or bartered from a vessel that fishes only in state waters and that has not been issued a shark LAP, HMS Angling permit, or HMS Charter/Headboat permit pursuant to § 635.4.

#### Classification

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,

NOAA (AA), finds that providing prior notice and public comment for this action is impracticable and contrary to the public interest because the fisheries are currently underway and any delay in this action would result in overharvest of the Gulf of Mexico non-blacknose SCS quota and be inconsistent with management requirements and objectives. Similarly, affording prior notice and opportunity for public comment on this action is contrary to the public interest because if the quota is exceeded, the stock may be negatively affected and fishermen ultimately could experience reductions in the available quota and a lack of fishing opportunities in future seasons. For these reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effective date pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This action is required under § 635.28(b)(2) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: November 27, 2015.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 665

**RIN 0648-XD998**

#### Pacific Island Pelagic Fisheries; 2015 U.S. Territorial Longline Bigeye Tuna Catch Limits for Guam

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

**ACTION:** Announcement of a valid specified fishing agreement.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces a valid specified fishing agreement that allocates 1,000 mt of the 2015 Guam bigeye tuna limit to U.S. longline fishing vessels. The agreement supports the long-term sustainability of fishery resources of the U.S. Pacific Islands.

**DATES:** November 27, 2015.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact for this action, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2015-0077, are available from [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), or from

Michael D. Tosatto, Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific Islands Region (PIR), 1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg. 176, Honolulu, HI 96818.

Copies of the fishery ecosystem plans are available from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, tel 808-522-8220, fax 808-522-8226, or [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org).

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jarad Makaiiau, NMFS PIRO Sustainable Fisheries, 808-725-5176.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** In a final rule published on November 6, 2015, NMFS specified a 2015 limit of 2,000 metric tons (mt) of longline-caught bigeye tuna for Guam (80 FR 68778). Of the 2,000 mt, NMFS allows the territory to allocate up to 1,000 mt to U.S. longline fishing vessels identified in a specified fishing agreement that meets established criteria.

On November 25, 2015, NMFS received from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council a specified fishing agreement between the Government of Guam and Quota Management, Inc. (QMI). In the transmittal memorandum, the Council's Executive Director noted that the specified fishing agreement was consistent with the criteria set forth in 50 CFR 665.819(c)(1). NMFS reviewed the agreement and determined that it is consistent with the Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, implementing regulations, and other applicable laws.

In accordance with 50 CFR 300.224(d) and 50 CFR 665.819(c)(9), vessels identified in the agreement may retain and land bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean under the Guam limit.

NMFS began attributing bigeye tuna caught by vessels identified in the agreement to Guam starting on November 25, 2015. If and when NMFS determines the fishery will reach the 1,000 mt attribution limit, we will restrict harvest of bigeye tuna caught by vessels identified in the agreement.

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

Dated: November 27, 2015.

**Emily H. Menashes,**

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

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