

Closures or subsequent adjustments to the daily retention limit, if any, will be published 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 Atlantic HMS 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 via toll-free phone at (888)872-8862; or the Internet (www.nmfspermits.com); or, if landed in the states of North Carolina or Maryland, to a reporting station prior to offloading. Information about these state harvest tagging programs, including reporting station locations, can be obtained in North Carolina by calling (800) 338-7804, and in Maryland by calling (410) 213-1531.

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).

General Category Retention Limits

Based on current and historical General category landings rates in the June through August time-period, it is highly unlikely that the June through August subquota will be filled in the remaining fishing days, which would result in unused quota being added to the September subquota. During the 2001 and 2002 fishing years, 156 mt and 182 mt were carried over from the June through August to the September time-period subquotas, respectively. Under § 635.23 (a)(4), NMFS may increase or decrease the daily retention limit of large medium and giant BFT over a range from zero (on restricted fishing days) to a maximum of three per vessel to allow for maximum utilization of the BFT quota. Based on a review of dealer reports, current and historical daily landing trends, and the availability of BFT on the fishing grounds, NMFS has determined that an increase of the daily retention limit in the General category is necessary in order to provide an opportunity to harvest the June through

August subquota in its designated time period. Therefore, effective June 15 through August 31, 2003, the first quota subperiod, NMFS adjusts the daily retention limit to two large medium or giant BFT per vessel.

The intent of this adjustment is to allow for maximum utilization of the June through August subquota (specified under § 635.27(a)) by General category participants in order to help achieve optimum yield in the General category fishery, to collect a broad range of data for stock monitoring purposes, and to be consistent with the objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, and sharks (HMS FMP).

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 635.23 (a)(4) and (b)(3). This action is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

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Bruce C. Morehead,

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