

Black Sea Bass Quota Corrections

No RSA landings of black sea bass were made during Quarter 1 of 2002. RSA landings during Quarters 2 and 3 were 4,802 lb (2,178 kg) and 26,360 lb (11,957 kg), respectively, and were counted erroneously as commercial black sea bass landings. Consistent with the quota counting procedures, in the January 2, 2003, final rule, the 2002 Quarter 2 overage reported was 214,338 lb (97,223 kg), the 2003 Quarter 2 quota was adjusted to 750,902 lb (340,607 kg), the 2002 Quarter 3 overage reported was 5,459 lb (2,476 kg), and the 2003 Quarter 2 quota was adjusted to 401,288 lb (182,023 kg). Properly accounting for the RSA landings, the 2002 Quarter 2 overage should be corrected to 209,536 lb (95,045 kg), resulting in a revised Quarter 2 quota of 755,704 lb (342,785

kg; a 0.6-percent increase). Accounting for the RSA landings results in there being no overage of the 2002 Quarter 3 quota, so the 2003 Quarter 3 quota is restored to 406,747 lb (184,499 kg; a 1.4-percent increase). Only Quarters 1 through 3 are included in the calculations of adjusted quotas for the following year.

Under the current quarterly black sea bass quota program, any adjustment to the Quarter 4 quota would be made, if necessary, following review of the 2002 Quarter 4 landings, to be conducted as soon as possible after June 30, 2003. However, Amendment 13 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP, which was approved by NMFS on January 29, 2003, establishes an annual (calendar year) coastwide quota for the commercial black sea bass fishery, and NMFS anticipates that the

final rule implementing the Amendment will be effective prior to the end of Quarter 1 for 2003. The annual quota would fully account for the total 2002 quota, all reported 2002 commercial landings, and all reported 2002 RSA landings. Commercial landings made in 2003 to date will be measured against the annual quota, rather than the quarterly quotas, and adjustments would be made, as necessary, at year-end to the annual quota.

The commercial black sea bass 2003 adjusted quotas, less the amount set aside for 2003 research (as published in the January 2, 2003, final rule), the amounts being restored to the 2003 adjusted quotas, and the revised 2003 quotas (less the amount set aside for 2003 research), by quarter, are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. REVISED 2003 COMMERCIAL BLACK SEA BASS QUOTA ALLOCATIONS BY QUARTER

| Quarter | 2003 Adjusted Quota, less the 2003 Research Set-Aside (as published January 2, 2003) | | Amount Restored to the 2003 Adjusted Quota ¹ | | Revised 2003 Quota, less the 2003 Research Set-Aside | |
|---------|--|-----------------|---|------------------|--|-----------------|
| | lb | kg ² | lb | kg ² | lb | kg ² |
| 1 | 1,197,664 | 543,257 | 0 | 0 | 1,197,664 | 543,257 |
| 2 | 750,902 | 340,607 | 4,802 | 2,178 | 755,704 | 342,785 |
| 3 | 401,288 | 182,023 | 5,459 | 2,476 | 406,747 | 184,499 |
| 4 | 652,180 | 295,827 | n/a ³ | n/a ³ | 652,180 | 295,827 |
| Total | 3,002,034 | 1,361,714 | | | 3,012,295 | 1,366,368 |

¹ Amount restored was calculated to correct for 2002 RSA landings counted as commercial landings.

² Kilograms are as converted from pounds and may not necessarily add due to rounding.

³ Not applicable.

Classification

This action is required by 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: February 24, 2003.

Bruce C. Morehead,

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 679**

[Docket No. 021212307-3037-3037-02; I.D. 110602C]

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands; Final 2003 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish

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

ACTION: Final 2003 specifications for groundfish and associated management measures; apportionment of reserves; request for comments; closures.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces final 2003 harvest specifications, prohibited species catch (PSC) allowances, and associated management measures for the groundfish fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to

establish harvest limits and associated management measures for groundfish during the 2003 fishing year and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP). The intended effect of this action is to conserve and manage the groundfish resources in the BSAI.

DATES: The final 2003 harvest specifications and associated apportionment of reserves are effective at 1200 hrs, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), February 25, 2003 through 2400 hrs, A.l.t., December 31, 2003. Comments on the apportionment of reserves must be received by March 18, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the apportionment of reserves may be sent to Sue Salvesson, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668, Attn: Lori Durall. Comments also may be sent via facsimile (fax) to 907-586-7557. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet. Courier or hand delivery of comments may be