



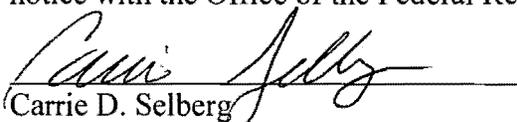
## NMFS Closes Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (BFT) General Category January Fishery

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closes the General category fishery for large medium and giant BFT (measuring 73 inches curved fork length or greater) **effective 11:30 p.m. local time on January 22, 2012**, until it reopens on June 1, 2012. Based on the best available BFT landings information for the General category BFT fishery (i.e., 17 mt of the available 23.1 mt landed as of January 17), NMFS has determined that the General category January BFT subquota will be reached by January 22, 2012. Therefore, through May 31, 2012, **fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant BFT by persons aboard vessels permitted in the Atlantic Tunas General and HMS Charter/Headboat categories (while fishing commercially) must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time on January 22, 2012**. The General category will reopen automatically on June 1, 2012, for the June through August subperiod. Limited catch and release is permissible as described below. The intent of this closure is to prevent overharvest of the General category January BFT subquota.

In recent months, NMFS announced two actions relevant to the General category: On November 30, 2011, NMFS published a final rule to address adjustments to the General and Harpoon category regulations. Among other actions, this final rule allowed the General category BFT season to remain open until the January subquota is reached or March 31 (whichever happens first). On December 9, 2011, following consideration of determination criteria specified at § 635.27(a)(8), NMFS announced a General category retention limit of two large medium or giant BFT (measuring 73 inches or greater) per vessel per day/trip, effective January 1 through March 31, 2012, or until the January BFT subquota has been met.

Fishermen may catch and release or tag and release BFT of all sizes, subject to the requirements of Highly Migratory Species catch-and-release and tag-and-release programs. NMFS regulations at 50 CFR 635.21(a)(1) require that all BFT that are released be handled in a manner that will maximize survivability, and without removing the fish from the water. For additional information on safe handling, see the Careful Catch and Release brochure available at [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/).

NMFS may make further General category adjustments via inseason action, if warranted. This notice is a courtesy to BFT fishery permit holders to help keep you informed about the fishery. For additional information, call (888) 872-8862 or (978) 281-9260, or go to [www.hmspermits.gov](http://www.hmspermits.gov). Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register.

  
Carrie D. Selberg  
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

JAN 20 2012

Date

### SIGN UP FOR ATLANTIC HMS NEWS!

-- An electronic newsletter informing you of the latest HMS-related actions --

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/newslist/>

