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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 151130999-6225-01]

RIN 0648-XF069

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Bluefish Fishery; Quota Transfer

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; approval of quota transfer.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces its approval of a transfer of 2016 commercial bluefish quota from the State of Maryland to the State of New York. The approval of the transfer complies with the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provision. This announcement also informs the public of the revised commercial quotas for Maryland and New York.

DATES: Effective December 9, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Reid Lichwell, Fishery Management Specialist, (978) 281-9112.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulations governing the Atlantic bluefish fishery are found in 50 CFR 648.160 through 648.167. The regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from Maine through Florida. The process to set the annual commercial

quota and the percent allocated to each state are described in § 648.162.

The final rule implementing Amendment 1 to the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan published in the **Federal Register** on July 26, 2000 (65 FR 45844), and provided a mechanism for transferring bluefish quota from one state to another. Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), can request approval of a transfer of bluefish commercial quota under § 648.162(e)(1)(i) through (iii). The Regional Administrator must first approve any such transfer based on the criteria in § 648.162(e).

Maryland and New York have requested the transfer of 50,000 lb (22,680 kg) of bluefish commercial quota from Maryland to New York. Both states have certified that the transfer meets all pertinent state requirements. This quota transfer was requested by New York to ensure that its 2016 quota would not be exceeded. The Regional Administrator has approved this quota transfer based on his determination that the criteria set forth in § 648.162(e)(1)(i) through (iii) have been met. The revised bluefish quotas for calendar year 2016 are: Maryland, 96,631 lb (43,831 kg); and New York, 927,289 lb (420,611 kg). These quota adjustments revise the quotas specified in the final rule implementing the 2016-2018 Atlantic Bluefish Specifications published on August 4, 2016 (81 FR 51370), and reflect all subsequent commercial bluefish quota transfers completed to date. For information of previous transfers for fishing year 2016 visit: <http://go.usa.gov/xZT8H>

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

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

Dated: December 7, 2016

Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director,

Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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