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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 161017970-6999-02]

RIN 0648-XF835

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Quota Transfer

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; quota transfer.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Commonwealth of Virginia is transferring a portion of its 2017 commercial summer flounder quota to the State of Rhode Island. This quota adjustment is necessary to comply with the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provisions. This announcement informs the public of the revised commercial quotas for Virginia and Rhode Island.

DATES: Effective November 22, 2017, through December 31, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cynthia Hanson, Fishery Management Specialist, (978)281-9180.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery are found in 50 CFR 648.100 through 648.110. These regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from Maine through North Carolina.

The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state is described in § 648.102, and the initial 2017 allocations were published on December 22, 2016 (81 FR 93842).

The final rule implementing Amendment 5 to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan, as published in the *Federal Register* on December 17, 1993 (58 FR 65936), provided a mechanism for transferring summer flounder commercial quota from one state to another. Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator, can transfer or combine summer flounder commercial quota under § 648.102(c)(2). The Regional Administrator is required to consider the criteria in § 648.102(c)(2)(i)(A) through (C) in the evaluation of requests for quota transfers or combinations.

Virginia is transferring 38 lb (17 kg) of summer flounder commercial quota to Rhode Island. This transfer was requested by Virginia to repay landings by a Virginia-permitted vessel that landed in Rhode Island under a safe harbor agreement. The revised summer flounder quotas for calendar year 2017 are now: Virginia, 1,219,874 lb (553,326 kg); and Rhode Island, 887,960 lb (402,772 kg); based on the initial quotas published in the 2017 Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Specifications and subsequent transfers.

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: November 22, 2017.

Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director,

Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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