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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 151130999-6594-02]

RIN 0648-XF834

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; quota transfer.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Commonwealth of Virginia is transferring a portion of its 2017 commercial bluefish quota to the State of Rhode Island. This quota adjustment is necessary to comply with the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provisions. This announcement informs the public of the revised commercial bluefish 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 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 and the initial 2017 allocations were published on March 13, 2017 (82 FR 13402).

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 NMFS Greater Atlantic 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).

Virginia is transferring 338 lb (153 kg) of Atlantic bluefish 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. Both states have agreed to the transfer and certified that it meets all pertinent requirements. The revised bluefish quotas for calendar year 2017 are now: Virginia, 1,014,435 lb (460,140 kg); and Rhode Island, 731,901 lb (331,985 kg); based on the initial quotas published in the 2016-2018 Atlantic Bluefish 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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