

Issued on October 16, 2002.

Annette M. Sandberg,

Deputy Administrator.

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 011004242-2005-02; I.D. 101102E]

#### Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Fishery; Quota Harvested for Maine Mahogany Quahog Fishery

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

**ACTION:** Commercial quota harvested for Maine mahogany quahog.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the annual quota for the Maine mahogany quahog fishery has been harvested. Commercial vessels operating under a Maine mahogany quahog permit may not harvest Maine mahogany quahogs from the Maine mahogany quahog zone for the remainder of the fishing year (through December 31, 2002). Regulations governing the Maine mahogany quahog fishery require publication of this notification to advise the public of this closure.

**DATES:** Effective 0001 hrs local time, October 24, 2002, through 2400 hrs local time, December 31, 2002.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Douglas W. Christel, 978-281-9141; fax 978-281-9135; e-mail [Douglas.Christel@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Christel@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The regulations governing the Maine mahogany quahog fishery appear at 50 CFR part 648. The regulations establish the annual quota for the harvest of mahogany quahogs within the Maine mahogany quahog zone at 100,000 Maine bushels (35,150 hL). The quota may be revised annually by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) within the range of 17,000 and 100,000 Maine bu (5,975 and 35,150 hL, respectively). The Maine mahogany quahog zone is defined as the area bounded on the east by the U.S.-Canada maritime boundary, on the south by a straight line at 43° 50' N. lat., and on the north and west by the shoreline of Maine.

The Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) monitors the commercial Maine mahogany quahog quota for each fishing year using dealer and other available information to determine when the quota is projected to have been harvested. NMFS is required to publish a notification in the **Federal Register** notifying commercial vessel permit holders that, effective upon a specific date, the Maine mahogany quahog quota has been harvested and no commercial quota is available for harvesting mahogany quahogs by vessels possessing a Maine mahogany quahog permit for the remainder of the year, from within the Maine mahogany quahog area.

The Regional Administrator has determined, based upon dealer reports and other available information, that the 2002 Maine mahogany quahog quota has been harvested. Therefore, effective 0001 hrs local time, October 24, 2002, further landings of Maine mahogany quahogs harvested from within the Maine mahogany quahog area by vessels possessing a Maine mahogany quahog Federal fisheries permit are prohibited through December 31, 2002. The 2003 fishing year for Maine mahogany quahog harvest will open on January 1, 2003.

#### Classification

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

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

Dated: October 15, 2002.

**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 648

[I.D. 101002A]

#### Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Tilefish Fishery; Continuation of Specifications for the 2003 Fishing Year

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

**ACTION:** Notification of continuation of specifications.

**SUMMARY:** NOAA Fisheries announces that it will continue the 2002 quota specifications for the golden tilefish fishery for the 2003 fishing year. Accordingly, the total allowable landings (TAL) for the 2003 fishing year will remain at 1.995 million lb (905,172 kg). The intent of this action is to notify the public that there will be no change in the fishery specifications for tilefish for the fishing year beginning November 1, 2002.

**DATES:** Effective from November 1, 2002, through October 31, 2003.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be sent to Patricia A. Kurkul, Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on Continuation of Specifications for the Golden Tilefish Fishery." Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9135.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Doug Christel, 978-281-9141; fax 978-281-9135; e-mail

[Douglas.Christel@noaa.gov](mailto:Douglas.Christel@noaa.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The final rule implementing the Tilefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) became effective on November 1, 2001 (66 FR 49136, September 26, 2001). Pursuant to the tilefish regulations at 50 CFR 648.290, the Tilefish FMP Monitoring Committee (Monitoring Committee) will meet after the completion of each stock assessment, or at the request of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) Chairman, to review tilefish landings information and any other relevant available data to determine if the annual quota requires modification to respond to changes to the stock's biological reference points or to ensure that the rebuilding schedule is maintained. Additional management measures or revisions to existing measures could also be considered at this time to ensure that the TAL would not be exceeded. Furthermore, up to 3 percent of the TAL could be set aside for a given fishing year for the purpose of funding research. In the event that a new stock assessment was not completed or the Council Chairman does not request that the Monitoring Committee meet, the regulations further specify that the previous year's specifications will remain effective and that NOAA Fisheries will issue notification in the **Federal Register** informing the public of such.

A new tilefish stock assessment is not scheduled to occur until 2004, and the