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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 121009528-2729-02]

RIN 0648-XD026

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; 2014 Commercial Summer Flounder Quota Adjustments

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

ACTION: Announcement of 2014 commercial summer flounder state quotas.

SUMMARY: NMFS is announcing the commercial summer flounder state quotas for fishing year 2014. The 2014 summer flounder specifications were established in December 2012. This notice incorporates any previously unaccounted for overages from fishing year 2012 and any known overages to date from fishing year 2013. These commercial state quotas may change as a result of a recent stock assessment and a recommendation by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

DATES: Effective January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Moira Kelly, Fishery Policy Analyst, (978) 281-9218.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission cooperatively manage the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries. Specifications in these fisheries include the acceptable biological catch (ABC) limit, various catch and landing subdivisions (such as the commercial and recreational sector annual catch limits (ACLs)), annual catch targets (ACTs), sector-specific landing limits (i.e., the commercial fishery quota and recreational harvest limit (RHL)), and research set-aside (RSA) established for the upcoming fishing year. Typically, these specifications are set on an annual basis and announced in the Federal Register in December of each year. Because the summer flounder stock assessment was scheduled for July 2013 and the normal specification schedule would be delayed, the Council established specifications for the 2014 summer flounder fishery in December 2012 (December 31, 2012; 77 FR 76942). These specifications included the initial state allocations, as well as the state allocations after adjusting for RSA.

An important component of the annual specifications rulemaking is the notification of the commercial summer flounder state quota and overages. Overages are calculated using final landings data from the previous fishing year and landings from the current fishing year through October 31. In this case, previously unaccounted for overages from fishing year 2012 are combined with known overages from fishing year 2013, through October 31, 2013. As a result, the 2014 summer flounder state quotas, adjusted for RSA and overages, are as follows:

Table 1: 2014 Commercial Summer Flounder State Quotas, as adjusted by overages and RSA

State	FMP Percent Share	2014 Initial Quota		2014 Initial Quota, less RSA		Quota Overages (through 10/31/13)		Adjusted 2014 Quota, less RSA and overages	
		lb	kg	lb	kg	lb	kg	lb	kg
ME	0.04756	5,579	2,533	5,417	2,457	0	0	5,417	2,457
NH	0.00046	54	24	52	24	0	0	52	24
MA	6.82046	800,091	363,242	776,788	352,345	28,199	12,791	748,589	339,554
RI	15.68298	1,839,732	835,240	1,786,147	810,183	0	0	1,786,147	810,183
CT	2.25708	264,772	120,207	257,061	116,601	0	0	257,061	116,601
NY	7.64699	897,050	407,261	870,922	395,044	79,355	35,995	791,587	359,058
NJ	16.72499	1,961,967	890,735	1,904,823	864,013	0	0	1,904,823	864,013
DE	0.01779	2,087	947	2,026	919	52,384	23,760	-50,358	-22,842
MD	2.03910	239,202	108,598	232,235	105,340	0	0	232,235	105,340
VA	21.31676	2,500,616	1,135,282	2,427,783	1,101,224	0	0	2,427,783	1,101,224
NC	27.44584	3,219,604	1,461,703	3,125,829	1,417,852	0	0	3,125,829	1,417,852
Total	100.00	11,730,754	5,326,000	11,389,082	5,166,000	155,376	70,476	11,284,065	5,118,366

On October 9, 2013, the Council met to discuss whether adjustments to the previously established 2014 specifications were necessary as a result of the updated stock assessment, and to establish fishing year 2015 specifications for the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries. The Council determined that an adjustment was necessary for the 2014 summer flounder specifications. Table 2 below summarizes the established 2014 summer flounder specifications, as well as the specifications that the Council voted to recommend in October 2013. The Council has not yet submitted the specifications package to be reviewed by NMFS; nor has NMFS made a determination that these adjustments would be implemented. The state quotas listed in Table 1 will be in effect until and unless otherwise changed through proposed and final rulemaking.

Table 2: Summer Flounder 2014 Specifications and Council Recommended 2014 Specifications

	2014 Specifications		October 2013 Council Recommended 2014 Specifications	
	million lb	mt	million lb	mt
ABC	22.24	10,088	21.94	9,950
Commercial ACL	12.05	5,467	12.87	5,837
Recreational ACL	10.19	4,621	9.07	4,113
Commercial ACT	12.05	5,467	12.87	5,837
Recreational ACT	10.19	4,621	9.07	4,113
Comm. Quota (less 3% for RSA)	11.39	5,166	10.51	4,767
RHL (less 3% for RSA)	7.59	3,444	7.01	3,178

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

Dated: December 23, 2013

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