

of rope covered with hose is secured on the lower beak to give control with the user's foot.

(e) *A hank of rope.* Placed in the corner of a turtle's jaw, a hank of rope can be used to gag open a sea turtle's mouth. A 6-ft (1.83 m) lanyard of approximately $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch (4.76 mm) braided nylon rope may be folded to create a hank, or looped bundle, of rope. Any size soft-braided nylon rope is allowed, however it must create a hank of approximately 2–4 inches (5.08 cm–10.16 cm) in thickness.

(f) *A set of four PVC splice couplings.* PVC splice couplings can be positioned inside a turtle's mouth to allow access to the back of the mouth for hook and line removal. They are to be held in place with the needle-nose pliers. To ensure proper fit and access, a required set must consist of the following Schedule 40 PVC splice coupling sizes: 1 inch (2.54 cm), $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch (3.18 cm), $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch (3.81 cm), and 2 inches (5.08 cm).

(g) *A large avian oral speculum.* A large avian oral speculum provides the ability to hold a turtle's mouth open and to control the head with one hand, while removing a hook with the other hand. The avian oral speculum must be 9-inches (22.86 cm) long, and constructed of $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch (4.76 mm) wire diameter surgical stainless steel (Type 304). It must be covered with 8 inches (20.32 cm) of clear vinyl tubing ($\frac{5}{16}$ -inch (7.9 mm) outside diameter, $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch (4.76 mm) inside diameter), friction tape, or similar to pad the surface.

B. Sea turtle handling and release requirements. Sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, as specified in paragraphs A.1. through 4. of this Appendix F, must be used to disengage any hooked or entangled sea turtles that cannot be brought onboard. Sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear, as specified in paragraphs A.5. through 12. of this Appendix F, must be used to facilitate access, safe handling, disentanglement, and hook removal or hook cutting of sea turtles that can be brought onboard, where feasible. Sea turtles must be handled, and bycatch mitigation gear must be used, in accordance with the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines provided by NMFS and in accordance with the onboard handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) of this title.

1. *Boated turtles.* When practicable, active and comatose sea turtles must be brought on board, with a minimum of injury, using a dipnet as specified in paragraph A.5. of this Appendix F. All turtles less than 3 ft (.91 m) carapace length should be boated, if sea conditions permit.

(a) A boated turtle should be placed on a cushioned/support device, as specified in paragraph A.6. of this Appendix F, in an upright orientation to immobilize it and facilitate gear removal. Then, it should be determined if the hook can be removed without causing further injury. All externally embedded hooks should be removed, unless hook removal would result in further injury to the turtle. No attempt to remove a hook should be made if it has been swallowed and the insertion point is not visible, or if it is determined that removal would result in further injury. If a hook cannot be removed, as much line as possible should be removed

from the turtle using monofilament cutters as specified in paragraph A.11. of this Appendix F, and the hook should be cut as close as possible to the insertion point before releasing the turtle, using bolt cutters as specified in paragraph A.10. of this Appendix F. If a hook can be removed, an effective technique may be to cut off either the barb, or the eye, of the hook using bolt cutters, and then to slide the hook out. When the hook is visible in the front of the mouth, a mouth-opener, as specified in paragraph A.12. of this Appendix F, may facilitate opening the turtle's mouth and a gag may facilitate keeping the mouth open. Short-handled dehookers for internal hooks, or long-nose or needle-nose pliers, as specified in paragraphs A.7. and A.8. of this Appendix F, respectively, should be used to remove visible hooks from the mouth that have not been swallowed on boated turtles, as appropriate. As much gear as possible must be removed from the turtle without causing further injury prior to its release. Refer to the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines required in § 622.10(c)(1), and the handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) of this title, for additional information.

(b) [Reserved]

2. *Non-boated turtles.* If a sea turtle is too large, or hooked in a manner that precludes safe boating without causing further damage or injury to the turtle, sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear specified in paragraphs A.1. through 4. of this Appendix F must be used to disentangle sea turtles from fishing gear and disengage any hooks, or to clip the line and remove as much line as possible from a hook that cannot be removed, prior to releasing the turtle, in accordance with the protocols specified in § 622.10(c)(1).

(a) Non-boated turtles should be brought close to the boat and provided with time to calm down. Then, it must be determined whether or not the hook can be removed without causing further injury. All externally embedded hooks must be removed, unless hook removal would result in further injury to the turtle. No attempt should be made to remove a hook if it has been swallowed, or if it is determined that removal would result in further injury. If the hook cannot be removed and/or if the animal is entangled, as much line as possible must be removed prior to release, using a line cutter as specified in paragraph A.1. of this Appendix F. If the hook can be removed, it must be removed using a long-handled dehooker as specified in paragraphs A.2. and A.3. of this Appendix F. Without causing further injury, as much gear as possible must be removed from the turtle prior to its release. Refer to the careful release protocols and handling/release guidelines required in § 622.10(c)(1), and the handling and resuscitation requirements specified in § 223.206(d)(1) for additional information.

(b) [Reserved]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 140106011–4338–02]

RIN 0648–XD458

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; Closure for the Common Pool Fishery

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; area closure.

SUMMARY: This action closes the Eastern U.S./Canada Area for Northeast multispecies common pool vessels for the remainder of fishing year 2014, through April 30, 2015. Based on recent data, the common pool fishery has caught 130 percent of its Eastern Georges Bank cod total allowable catch, triggering the regulatory requirement to close the area for the remainder of the fishing year. This action is intended to prevent further overage of the common pool's annual quota of Eastern Georges Bank cod.

DATES: This action is effective August 26, 2014, through April 30, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Liz Sullivan, Fishery Management Specialist, 978–282–8493.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Federal regulations at § 648.85(a)(3)(iv)(E) require the Regional Administrator to close the Eastern U.S./Canada Area when any individual total allowable catch (TAC) allocation for the area is projected to be caught. In such cases, the Eastern U.S./Canada Area (including any Special Access Programs (SAPs) that reside in this area) closes to all common pool vessels, i.e. Northeast (NE) multispecies limited access non-sector vessels and NE multispecies open access vessels. The fishing year 2014 (May 1, 2014, through April 30, 2015) common pool TAC for Eastern Georges Bank cod is 3.0 mt. Based on the most recent data and information, which include vessel trip reports, dealer-reported landings, and vessel monitoring system information, we have determined that 130 percent of the fishing year TAC was caught as of August 19, 2014. Because of the low catch limit and the rate at which a common pool vessel can harvest Eastern Georges Bank cod, it was not possible to initiate this action before the point that the fishing year TAC was exceeded.

Therefore, effective August 26, 2014, the Eastern U.S./Canada Area is closed for the remainder of the fishing year, through April 30, 2015, to all common pool vessels. Effective August 26, 2014, it is unlawful for a common pool vessel to declare into, enter, or fish in the Eastern U.S./Canada Area. This restriction does not apply to the groundfish trip of a common pool vessel that crossed the VMS demarcation line before August 26, 2014. The Eastern U.S./Canada Area will reopen to common pool vessels at the beginning of fishing year 2015, on May 1, 2015. Any overages of an Eastern Georges Bank TAC will be deducted from the following fishing year.

Weekly quota monitoring reports for the common pool fishery can be found on our Web site at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/MultiMonReports.htm>. We will continue to monitor common pool catch through vessel trip reports, dealer-reported landings, vessel monitoring system catch reports, and other available information and, if necessary, we will make additional adjustments to common pool management measures.

Classification

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

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) and 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3) to waive prior notice and the opportunity for public comment and the 30-day delayed effectiveness period because it would be impracticable and contrary to the public interest.

The Eastern U.S./Canada Area closure is required by regulation in order to reduce the probability of the common pool fishery exceeding its TAC of Eastern Georges Bank cod, or if exceeded, reduce further overage of the TAC. Any overages of the common pool's TACs would undermine conservation objectives and trigger the implementation of accountability measures that would have negative economic impacts on common pool vessels. The data and information showing that Eastern Georges Bank cod is projected to have exceeded its TAC for the stock only became available recently. The time necessary to provide for prior notice and comment, and a 30-day delay in effectiveness, would prevent NMFS from implementing the necessary

Eastern U.S./Canada Area closure in a timely manner, which could undermine management objectives of the NE Multispecies Fishery Management Plan,

and cause negative economic impacts to the common pool fishery.

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

Dated: August 26, 2014.

Alan D. Risenhoover,

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 2014-20649 Filed 8-26-14; 4:15 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 140220160-4692-02]

RIN 0648-BD99

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Skate Fishery; Framework Adjustment 2

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

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS approves and implements measures in Framework Adjustment 2 to the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan, which was developed by the New England Fishery Management Council. The approved management measures include updated skate fishery specifications for the 2014-2015 fishing years and changes to skate reporting requirements. The action is necessary to update the Fishery Management Plan to be consistent with the best available scientific information, and improve management of the skate fisheries. The rule is expected to help conserve skate stocks, while maintaining economic opportunities for the skate fisheries.

DATES: This rule is effective September 29, 2014.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the framework, including the Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR) and other supporting documents for the action are available from Thomas A. Nies, Executive Director, New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950. The framework is also accessible via the Internet at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov>.

NMFS prepared a Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (FRFA), which is contained in the Classification section of this rule. Copies of the FRFA and the Small Entity Compliance Guide are available from the Regional

Administrator, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, NMFS, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, and are available via the Internet at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tobey Curtis, Fishery Policy Analyst, (978) 281-9273.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The New England Fishery Management Council is responsible for developing management measures for skate fisheries in the northeastern U.S. through the Northeast Skate Complex Fishery Management Plan (Skate FMP). Seven skate species are managed under the Skate FMP: Winter; little; thorny; barndoor; smooth; clearnose; and rosette. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee reviews the best available information on the status of skate populations and makes recommendations on acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the skate complex (all seven species). This recommendation is then used as the basis for catch limits and other management measures for the skate fisheries.

This final rule approves and implements measures contained in Framework Adjustment 2 to the Skate FMP. The Council developed Framework 2 to update the skate fishery specifications (i.e., annual catch limit (ACL), annual catch target (ACT), total allowable landings (TAL), and possession limits) for fishing years 2014 and 2015. Framework 2 also includes adjustments to reporting requirements for skate vessels and dealers. A proposed rule to implement the measures contained in Framework 2 published in the **Federal Register** on May 21, 2014 (79 FR 29154), with public comments accepted through June 20, 2014. Details concerning the development of Framework 2 and the proposed measures were contained in the preamble of the proposed rule and are not repeated here.

Final Measures

2014-2015 Specifications

Based upon the recommendations of the Council, the Skate ABC and associated catch limits are being reduced approximately 30 percent from 2013 levels. The catch reduction is largely based on declines in trawl survey biomass for the more abundant little and winter skate species (refer to the EA for more details; see **ADDRESSES**). NMFS is implementing the following specifications for the skate fishery for the 2014-2015 fishing years: