



Brad McHale  
Supervisory Fishery Management Specialist  
NOAA  
55 Greater Republic Drive  
Glouster, Massachusetts 01930

March 4, 2018

Dear Brad,

In regard to the North Carolina 2018 Bluefin Fishery -

The General Category Bluefin Tuna fishery opened on January 1, 2018 in North Carolina with 39 metric tons available for harvest.

- The Bluefin fishery on the Outer Banks generally runs from January through April and fish can be caught in the area as late as June and July.
- On March 2, 2018, NMFS transferred 10 metric tons of the Reserve Category to the General Category for North Carolina.
- Landings as of March 2, 2018, was 54.4 metric tons, and the fishery was closed.

Fishermen were prepared for a fishery similar to the previous year in 2017 -

- In 2017, the season in North Carolina opened with 40.9 metric tons.
- On March 2, 2017, NMFS transferred 40 metric tons that allowed fishermen to fish until March 29, 2017.
- Thus, 107 tons of Bluefin were harvested in 2017.
- In November 2017, ICCAT, the International Committee for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna, agreed to increase the bluefin quota for the Western Atlantic (US, Canada and Japan) from 2000 metric tons to 2350 metric tons over the next three years. This translates into a 17% increase in the US quota for 2018.

If the US has an increase of 17% for 2018, and last year's harvest was 107 metric tons from January through March, why has the January Subquota been closed after only 54.4 metric tons were harvested?

NMFS has the flexibility through Amendment 7 to make in-season transfers between categories based on catch rates and available quota. With additional quota available, as well as quota in the Purse Seine Category that has been utilized in the past for in-season transfers, NMFS has the authority and the quota to make a transfer that could keep North Carolina fishing

extending through March. Instead, the quota may now be utilized from June through December, traditionally when the fish are in New England waters.

North Carolina fishermen are being treated unfairly.

The January subquota is harvested commercially by local and transient fishermen from as far away as Hawaii. Those transient fishermen come here to try to make a winter's living. They rent boat slips, condos, hotels and houses. They eat in local restaurants. They purchase fuel, bait and ice from local fish houses and marinas. They are a boost to the local economy in an off-season for the Outer Banks.

The North Carolina Watermen United is requesting a transfer from the Purse Seine Category to the Reserve Category, and then a transfer from the Reserve to the General Category in order to re-open the January Subquota and allow fishermen access into the month of March.

Yours truly,

**Greg Mayer**

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GM: mm

cc: North Carolina General Assembly  
US Congress; Senators Burr and Tillis, Congressman Jones  
NC Fisheries Association  
Dare County Board of Commissioners