



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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Commercial Harvest Closure of Atlantic Dolphin Extended to June 30, 2015

The commercial harvest of Atlantic dolphin (mahimahi) from Maine through the east coast of Florida will **reopen from 4:15 p.m. (local time), June 24, until 12:01 a.m. (local time) June 30, 2015**. A previous *Federal Register* notification announced the commercial sector for dolphin would close at 12:01 a.m. June 24, 2015. However, a landings update indicates the dolphin catch limit has not yet been met. Information received from fishermen after the notification indicates that some vessels are far offshore and need additional time to return to port. Therefore, we are reopening the commercial sector for five days to allow for the catch limit to be caught and for vessels to return to port without having to discard dolphin.

The operator of a vessel with a federal commercial permit for dolphin-wahoo that is landing dolphin for sale must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such dolphin prior to 12:01 a.m. (local time), June 30, 2015. The prohibition on sale does not apply to sale or purchase of dolphin that were harvested, landed ashore, and sold prior to 12:01 a.m. (local time), June 30, 2015, and held in cold storage by a dealer or processor.

During the closure:

- Harvest or possession of dolphin is limited to the recreational bag and possession limits.
- Sale and purchase of dolphin is prohibited.
- The closure applies in both state and federal waters for vessels with a federal commercial permit.

This closure is necessary to protect the dolphin-wahoo fishery because the commercial annual catch limit will be reached.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has developed a fishery management plan amendment that would increase the commercial sector's dolphin allocation from 7.54% to 10%, and the resulting catch limit from 1,157,001 pounds whole weight to 1,534,485 pounds whole weight. If the amendment is approved and landings are below the catch limit, the commercial sector will be reopened later this year.