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Dated: March 13, 1996.

George T. Frampton, Jr.,  
Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and  
Parks.

[FR Doc. 96-6732 Filed 3-18-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-C

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration**

**50 CFR Part 285**

[I.D. 031296A]

**Atlantic Tuna Fisheries; Closure**

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

**ACTION:** Fishery closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS has determined that  
the 1996 Atlantic bluefin tuna (ABT)  
Angling category quota for fish between  
47 inches (119 cm) and 73 inches (185  
cm) has been reached. Therefore,  
landing large school and small medium  
ABT under the Angling category is  
prohibited effective at 11:30 p.m. on  
March 17, 1996. This action is being

taken to prevent overharvest of this  
category.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** The closure is effective  
11:30 p.m., local time, March 17, 1996,  
through December 31, 1996, or until the  
effective date of any future adjustment,  
which will be published in the Federal  
Register.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**  
William Hogarth, 301-713-2339.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**  
Regulations implemented under the  
authority of the Atlantic Tunas  
Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*)  
governing the harvest of ABT by persons  
and vessels subject to U.S. jurisdiction  
are found at 50 CFR part 285.

Implementing regulations for the  
Atlantic tuna fisheries at 50 CFR 285.22  
provide for a total annual quota of large  
school and small medium ABT to be  
harvested from the regulatory area.  
NMFS is required, under § 285.20(b)(1),  
to monitor the catch and landing  
statistics and, on the basis of these  
statistics, to project a date when the  
catch of ABT will equal the quota  
applicable to any period.

Preliminary information on total  
angling effort and catch of ABT between  
47 inches (119 cm) and 73 inches (185  
cm) indicates that for January and  
February, 1996, landings may total  
nearly 100 mt. Information available to

NMFS on fishing effort and catch rates  
since March 1, 1996, indicates that the  
remaining quota is likely to be taken by  
March 17, 1996. Therefore, fishing for,  
retention, possessing, or landing large  
school or small medium ABT must  
cease at 11:30 p.m., local time, March  
17, 1996. This action is to prevent  
overharvest of the quota established for  
this category.

Anglers may continue to fish for and  
land school size ABT, measuring 27  
inches (69 cm) to less than 47 inches  
(119 cm) total curved fork length.  
Retention of school ABT is subject to  
the revised bag limit of one fish per boat  
per day as set in a prior document (61  
FR 8223, March 4, 1996). Anglers may  
also continue to fish for ABT 47 inches  
(119 cm) or greater under the NMFS tag  
and release program (50 CFR 285.27).

**Classification**

This action is taken under 50 CFR  
285.20(b) and 50 CFR 285.22 and is  
exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*

Dated: March 14, 1996.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Fisheries  
Conservation and Management, National  
Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 96-6595 Filed 3-14-96; 3:56 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F