commercial landings for snowy grouper will reach the commercial annual catch limit (ACL) (commercial quota) by June 30, 2015. Therefore, NMFS closes the commercial sector for snowy grouper in the South Atlantic EEZ on June 30, 2015, and it will remain closed until the start of the next fishing season on January 1, 2016. This closure is necessary to protect the snowy grouper resource.

DATES: This rule is effective 12:01 a.m., local time, June 30, 2015, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Catherine Hayslip, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727–824–5305, email: *catherine.hayslip@noaa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic includes snowy grouper and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and is implemented by NMFS under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

The commercial ACL (equivalent to the commercial quota) for snowy grouper in the South Atlantic is 82,900 lb (37,603 kg), gutted weight, for the current fishing year, January 1 through December 31, 2015, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(a)(1).

Under 50 CFR 622.193(b)(1), NMFS is required to close the commercial sector for snowy grouper when the commercial ACL (commercial quota) is reached, or is projected to be reached, by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. NMFS projects that commercial landings of South Atlantic snowy grouper, as estimated by the Science and Research Director, will reach the commercial ACL by June 30, 2015. Accordingly, the commercial sector for South Atlantic snowy grouper is closed effective 12:01 a.m., local time, June 30, 2015, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2016.

The operator of a vessel with a valid commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper having snowy grouper on board must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such snowy grouper prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, June 30, 2015. During the commercial closure, harvest and possession of snowy grouper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits, as specified in § 622.187(b)(2)(ii) and (c)(1). Also during the commercial closure, the sale or purchase of snowy grouper taken from the EEZ is prohibited. The prohibition on sale or purchase does not apply to the sale or purchase of snowy grouper that were harvested, landed ashore, and sold prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, June 30, 2015, and were held in cold storage by a dealer or processor.

For a person on board a vessel for which a Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery has been issued, the bag and possession limits and the sale and purchase provisions of the commercial closure for snowy grouper would apply regardless of whether the fish are harvested in state or Federal waters, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(c)(1)(ii).

Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of snowy grouper and the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(b)(1) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act, because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the commercial sector for snowy grouper constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such procedures would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Such procedures are contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect snowy grouper since the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial ACL (commercial quota). Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially result in a harvest well in excess of the established commercial ACL (commercial quota).

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

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

Dated: June 25, 2015.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

[FR Doc. 2015–16017 Filed 6–25–15; 4:15 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 140117052–4402–02]

RIN 0648–XD985

Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Quota Transfer

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; quota transfer.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the State of North Carolina is transferring a portion of its 2015 commercial summer flounder quota to the Commonwealth of Virginia. These quota adjustments are necessary to comply with the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provision. This announcement is intended to inform the public of the revised commercial quota for each state involved.

DATES: Effective June 29, 2015, through December 31, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Reid Lichwell, Fishery Management Specialist, 978–281–9112.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery are in 50 CFR 648.100 through 50 CFR 648.110. These regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from North Carolina through Maine. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state are described in § 648.10(c)(1)(i).

The final rule implementing Amendment 5 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan provided a mechanism for summer flounder quota to be transferred from one state to another (December 17, 1993; 58 FR 65936). Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the

concurrence of the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator, can transfer or combine summer flounder commercial quota under § 648.102(c)(2). The Regional Administrator is required to consider the criteria in § 648.102(c)(2)(i) when evaluating requests for quota transfers or combinations.

North Carolina has agreed to transfer 7,340 lb (3,329 kg) of its 2015 commercial summer flounder quota to Virginia. This transfer was prompted by landings of a North Carolina vessel that was granted safe harbor in Virginia due to mechanical failure on May 3, 2015. As a result of these landings, a quota transfer is necessary to account for an increase in Virginia landings that would have otherwise accrued against the North Carolina quota.

The Regional Administrator has determined that the criteria set forth in § 648.102(c)(2)(i) have been met. The transfer is consistent with the criteria because it will not preclude the overall annual quota from being fully harvested, the transfer addresses an unforeseen variation or contingency in the fishery, and the transfer is consistent with the objectives of the FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The revised summer flounder commercial quotas for calendar year 2015 are: Virginia, 2,401,568 lb (1,089,330 kg); and North Carolina, 2,976,243 lb (1,350,001 kg).

Classification

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

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

Dated: June 25, 2015.

Jennifer M. Wallace,

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

[FR Doc. 2015–16019 Filed 6–29–15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 140904749–5507–02]

RIN 0648–BE50

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology Omnibus Amendment

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

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule implements approved management measures contained in the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology Omnibus Amendment to the fishery management plans of the Greater Atlantic Region, developed and submitted to NMFS by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils. This amendment is necessary to respond to a remand by the U.S. District of Columbia Court of Appeals decision concerning observer coverage levels specified by the SBRM and to add various measures to improve and expand on the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology previously in place. The intended effect of this action is to implement the following: A new prioritization process for allocation of observers if agency funding is insufficient to achieve target observer coverage levels; bycatch reporting and monitoring mechanisms; analytical techniques and allocation of at-sea fisheries observers; a precision-based performance standard for discard estimates; a review and reporting process; framework adjustment and annual specifications provisions; and provisions for industry-funded observers and observer set-aside programs.

DATES: This rule is effective July 30, 2015. The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of July 30, 2015.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) Omnibus Amendment, and of the Environmental Assessment (EA), with its associated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and the Regulatory Impact Review (RIR), are available from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; and from the New England Fishery Management Council, 50 Water Street, Mill 2, Newburyport, MA 01950. The SBRM Omnibus Amendment and EA/FONSI/RIR is also accessible via the Internet at: *www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Douglas Potts, Fishery Policy Analyst, 978–281–9341.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

This final rule implements the SBRM Omnibus Amendment management measures developed and submitted by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Regional Fishery Management Councils, which were approved by NMFS on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce on March 13, 2015. A proposed rule for this action was published on January 21, 2015 (80 FR 2898), with public comments accepted through February 20, 2015.

Section 303(a)(11) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires that all Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) ''establish a standardized reporting methodology to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in the fishery.'' The purpose of the amendment is to: Address the Appellate Court's remand by minimizing the discretion allowed in prioritizing allocation of observers when there are insufficient funds; explain the methods and processes by which bycatch is currently monitored and assessed for fisheries in the region; determine whether these methods and processes need to be modified and/or supplemented; establish standards of precision for bycatch estimation for these fisheries; and, thereby, document the SBRM established for all fisheries managed through the FMPs of the Greater Atlantic Region. Extensive background on the development of the SBRM Omnibus Amendment, including the litigation history that precipitated the need for the amendment, is provided in the proposed rule and supporting environmental assessment. For brevity, that information is not repeated here.

As detailed below (in the sections titled Bycatch Reporting and Monitoring Mechanisms and Analytical Techniques and Allocation of At-sea Fisheries Observers), this action incorporates by reference provisions of the SBRM Omnibus Amendment and EA/FONSI/RIR, identified formally as the