

JONES HELPS SECURE OPPORTUNITY FOR NC FISHERMEN TO CATCH MORE BLUEFIN TUNA

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today Congressman Walter B. Jones (NC-3) applauded the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) filing of a final rule that will give North Carolina fishermen the opportunity to harvest more bluefin tuna. Congressman Jones has been working on this issue for years. The rule, which will become effective in 30 days, will allow the bluefin tuna season for General Category permit holders to stay open through March 31, or until the full January sub-quota is caught. Under current rules, the season closes on January 31, regardless of whether the January sub-quota is fully harvested. The rule also allows for the vessel retention limit to be increased up to five.

"This is a good day for North Carolina tuna fishermen," said Congressman Jones. "We've worked on this issue for a long time, and today's action will help provide an economic boost to North Carolina fishing communities during the winter."

Bluefin tuna migrate south over the winter months. Depending on weather conditions, they may not appear off North Carolina until well into January. In years when this occurred, under the old rules North Carolina fishermen would be unfairly prevented from harvesting their fair share of these fish off their coast because the season would close at the end of January regardless of how much of the January sub-quota had been harvested. In 2011, the January sub-quota for General Category permit holders was 23.1 metric tons.

More information on today's NMFS announcement can be found here:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/newslist/2011/11-29-11_BFT_Regulatory_Amendment_Final_Rule.pdf