

## **LANDING REQUIREMENTS**

Billfish may be gutted, but they must be landed with the head, fins, and bill intact and remain in whole condition.

## **XII. CHARTER/HEADBOAT FISHING**

Vessels fishing with a HMS Charter/Headboat permit are able to take for-hire passengers recreational fishing for HMS. These vessels have different requirements than vessels fishing under an HMS Angling or Atlantic Tunas General category permit. Regulations may vary further among Charter/Headboat permit holders based on the following two vessel types:

**Charter**: A vessel less than 100 gross tons (90.8 mt) that meets the requirements of the U.S. Coast Guard to carry six or fewer passengers for-hire.

**Headboat**: A vessel that holds a valid Certificate of Inspection issued by the U.S. Coast Guard to carry passengers for-hire.

A “for-hire” trip is a recreational fishing trip carrying a fee-paying passenger; or a trip having more than three persons for a vessel licensed to carry six or fewer people; or a trip having more persons aboard than the number of crew specified on the vessel’s Certificate of Inspection for a U.S. Coast Guard inspected vessel.

The HMS charter/headboat fishery fleet is managed as a unique sector, due to its intrinsic mix of commercial and recreational operations. Charter and headboat vessel operators should continue to apply for the HMS Charter/Headboat permit, which covers the same fish as the HMS Angling permit. Only one type of permit that allows recreational fishing (HMS Angling, Charter/Headboat, or Atlantic Tunas General category permit) may be issued to any single vessel. (**NOTE**: Vessels issued a Charter/Headboat permit cannot possess an Atlantic Tunas Longline category permit or other tuna permits.)

## **COMMERCIAL SALE RESTRICTIONS FOR ATLANTIC HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT PERMITS**

Since there are commercial components to the Atlantic HMS Charter/Headboat permit fishery, there are instances when the catch may be commercially sold; however, this will depend on the species, and other types of commercial fishing permits that are held. Below is a list of HMS that can be commercially sold according to HMS permit combinations, and the type of charter/headboat trip that is occurring.

### **Shark**

#### **HMS Charter/Headboat AND Shark Directed Limited Access permits**

- o **For-hire**: May sell up to the recreational size and bag limits as long as

the commercial fishery is open. When the commercial fishery is closed, may keep, but not sell, up to the recreational size and bag limits.

- Non-for-hire: May sell up to the commercial size (no minimum size) and bag limits (33 non-sandbar LCS per vessel per trip, no limit for SCS and Pelagic sharks) as long as the commercial fishery is open. When the commercial fishery is closed, may not keep any sharks from that fishery.

### **HMS Charter/Headboat AND Shark Incidental Limited Access permits**

- For-hire: May sell up to the recreational size and bag limits as long as the commercial fishery is open. When the commercial fishery is closed, may not keep any sharks from that fishery.
- Non-for-hire: May sell up to the commercial size (no minimum size) and bag limits (3 non-sandbar LCS per vessel per trip, 16 SCS and Pelagic sharks combined per vessel per trip) as long as the commercial fishery is open.

## **Tuna**

### **HMS Charter/Headboat permit only**

- BAYS
  - For-hire: May sell BAYS tuna up to the recreational size and bag limits.
  - Non-for-hire: There are no recreational bag limits, but size limits do apply.
- Bluefin

HMS Charter/Headboat category vessels may fish under either the Angling or General category retention limits. The size class of the first bluefin tuna retained will determine the fishing category of all persons aboard the vessel for a given day. If fish >73" CFL are retained, they may be sold in accordance with the General category seasons and retention limits. HMS Charter/Headboat category vessel bluefin tuna retention limits are effective for all areas, except for the Gulf of Mexico as it is designated as a spawning ground for bluefin tuna. Therefore, NMFS does not allow HMS Charter/Headboat vessels to target or sell bluefin tuna while fishing in the Gulf of Mexico.

## **Swordfish**

### **HMS Charter/Headboat AND Swordfish Limited Access Handgear permits**

- For-hire: May sell up to the recreational size and bag limits, as long as the commercial fishery is open.
- Non-for-hire: May sell up to the commercial size (47" LJFL or 29" CK) and bag limits (no limit), as long as the commercial fishery is open.

## **HMS Charter/Headboat AND Swordfish Limited Access Directed or Incidental permits**

- o No possession of swordfish is allowed under this permit combination due to the requirement to hold Atlantic Tunas Longline and Swordfish Directed or Incidental permits in order to retain swordfish.

### **Billfish**

Commercial sale of all Atlantic billfish species is **prohibited**. Fishermen retaining billfish recreationally on a non-for-hire trip may **not** possess commercial limits of other HMS species.

## **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

### **Recreational reporting requirements**

#### **Non-tournament landings**

All HMS Charter/Headboat vessel owners/operators must report all **non-tournament landings** (*i.e.*, fish kept) of Atlantic bluefin tuna, blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and swordfish to NMFS within 24 hours of landing at the dock (with the exception of fish landed in Maryland or North Carolina\*). Non-tournament recreational landings of all **bluefin tuna** must be reported to NMFS by logging onto [www.hmspermits.gov](http://www.hmspermits.gov) or by calling the HMS Recreational Reporting Line at (888) 872-8862. Non-tournament recreational landings of all **billfish** and **swordfish** must be reported to NMFS by logging onto [www.hmspermits.gov](http://www.hmspermits.gov), or by calling (800) 894-5528.

\* In **Maryland** and **North Carolina**, HMS Charter/Headboat vessel owners must report their HMS landings at state-operated reporting stations (not via the web or phone number reported above). For additional information on these state's reporting stations, please call (410) 213-1531 (MD) or (800) 338-7804 (NC).

#### **Atlantic HMS Tournament landings**

Atlantic bluefin tuna, billfish and swordfish that are **landed in a registered Atlantic HMS tournament** do not need to be reported by the vessel owners if the tournament operator reports them. However, a vessel owner is responsible for reporting these landings if the tournament operator does not.

#### **NMFS recreational surveys**

Recreational anglers may be contacted on the dock or by phone and asked to participate in the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS) or Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP, formerly MRFSS). If contacted, anglers must participate in these surveys to facilitate scientific research and catch monitoring on these species. Participation in the LPS or MRIP does not fulfill non-tournament reporting obligations

### **Commercial reporting requirements**

#### **Billfish**

No commercial landings of billfish are allowed.

#### **Swordfish, Sharks, and Tunas**

If a vessel owner issued an HMS Charter/Headboat permit also has a permit issued in a NMFS fishery that is required to report (*e.g.*, NMFS Northeast Region Multispecies logbook (VTR) or NMFS Southeast Region Snapper/Grouper logbook), then any commercial landings must be reported under the appropriate NMFS Regional vessel logbook program. If the vessel owner only holds an HMS Charter/Headboat permit, that owner is required to report commercial landings in the appropriate NMFS logbook program, if selected.

### **HMS Logbook and NMFS Observer Program**

In addition, if selected by NMFS, HMS CHB permit holders must complete a logbook and submit cost earnings information to NMFS. You are not required to carry a fishery observer on board, but you may participate in a voluntary Charter/Headboat observer program. If you are interested in participating in the voluntary observer program, please contact the HMS Management Division at (301) 427-8503.

## **XIII. TOURNAMENTS**

### **DEFINITION**

An Atlantic HMS tournament is defined as any fishing competition involving Atlantic HMS, in which participants must register, or otherwise enter, or in which a prize or award is offered for catching or landing HMS. This includes fishing tournaments where the target species is not an Atlantic HMS, but where points, prizes, or awards are received for catching Atlantic HMS. Tournaments may take place in ports within any Atlantic or Gulf of Mexico coastal state, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

### **REGISTRATION**

Atlantic HMS tournament operators are required to register their tournament with the HMS Management Division of NMFS **at least four weeks prior** to the start of the tournament.

Registration information includes, but is not limited to:

- Tournament name
- Location
- Date(s)
- Director name, contact information
- Target Species

An Atlantic HMS tournament **registration form** must be completed, signed, and sent to the Atlantic HMS Management Division via one of the following methods:

NMFS HMS Management Division  
263 13<sup>th</sup> Ave, South  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701  
Phone: (727) 824-5399  
Fax: (727) 824-5398

Fax  
(727) 824-5398

E-mail  
[HMSTournamentRegistry@noaa.gov](mailto:HMSTournamentRegistry@noaa.gov)