

*Science, Service, Stewardship*

**2012  
Recreational  
Compliance  
Guide**

Guide for Complying with the  
Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish,  
Sharks, and Billfish  
Regulations

Office of Sustainable Fisheries  
Highly Migratory Species  
Management Division



(As of March 1, 2012)



## Introduction to Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management



Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) including tunas, swordfish, sharks, and billfish are managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under the authority of the Secretary of Commerce, with consideration for the domestic and international aspects of these fisheries.

The *Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan* (HMS FMP) was developed for the integrated management of HMS within the Atlantic Ocean, which includes the Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico. Consistent with the HMS FMP, NMFS recently updated and amended several regulations. Important regulatory changes from the previous Compliance Guide (August 3, 2010) include, **but are not limited to**, the following sections:

- VIII. Recreational Shark Fishing: Possession of hammerhead (scalloped, smooth, and great) and oceanic whitetip sharks
- VIII. Shortfin Mako: NMFS encourages live release of shortfin makos. A new website/Android application for mapping released fish has been launched.
- IX. Recreational Tuna Fishing Landing restrictions (tail trimming)
- XI. Recreational Billfish Fishing (addition of Roundscale Spearfish to the HMS Management Unit)

This 2012 Recreational Compliance Guide amends all previous guides and is produced in compliance with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act. This guide is intended to provide a plain-language summary of how to comply with the regulations for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, sharks, and billfish.

Recreational fishermen **are required** to hold an Atlantic HMS (Angling category) recreational fishing permit in order to recreationally harvest Atlantic sharks, tunas, swordfish, and billfish in federal waters. Permit applications can be completed online at <http://www.hmspermits.gov> or can be obtained via fax or mail by calling (888) 872-8862.

HMS permit holders must abide by all applicable federal regulations, regardless of where fishing occurs, including in state waters. However, when fishing in the waters of a state with more restrictive regulations, the more restrictive state regulations apply.

Fishery rules change frequently. It is **your responsibility as a fisherman** to become familiar with the latest regulatory updates and to comply with the current official regulations. For a comprehensive list of updated Atlantic HMS regulations, please refer to the ELECTRONIC CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov>). **If there is a discrepancy between the summary in this document and the regulations in 50 CFR**

**part 635, the regulations will take precedence.**

For updates on **Atlantic sharks, swordfish, or billfish** call the HMS Management Division located in Silver Spring, Maryland at (301) 427-8503. For updates on **Atlantic tunas**, such as bluefin tuna quota monitoring or retention limits, visit <http://www.hmspermits.gov> or call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (888) 872-8862. For more detailed information on tunas, contact the HMS Management Division located in Gloucester, Massachusetts at (978) 281-9260.

To request a copy of a particular rule or for current updates, call the HMS Management Division at (301) 427-8503 or visit the HMS website at [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/). To stay up-to-date on HMS regulations, sign-up for the HMS email newsletter and listserv *Atlantic HMS News* at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/newslist/>.

**What’s Inside?**

This Compliance Guide covers the four HMS species categories: Atlantic sharks, tunas, swordfish, and billfish. Each category has a quick reference sheet containing basic, need-to-know information, regarding HMS fishing regulations. More detailed sections that provide in-depth information for each category are also included. There is also specific information regarding charter/headboat fishing, HMS tournaments, and relevant contact information.

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Please see 50 CFR part 635 for the current Atlantic HMS regulations, as regulations are subject to change. Regulations may change, and if disparities with this guide exist, the regulations prevail.