

release brochure is available from the Atlantic HMS website:

[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Compliance_Guide/](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Compliance_Guide/Careful_release_brochure.pdf)

[Careful_release_brochure.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Compliance_Guide/Careful_release_brochure.pdf). This brochure outlines fishing techniques and gear modifications that can be employed to increase the survival of HMS caught by recreational anglers.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All recreationally landed non-tournament bluefin tuna must be reported to NMFS by vessel owners or their designee within 24 hours of landing at the dock.

Tuna landings in Maryland or North Carolina, must be reported at state-operated reporting stations. For additional information on these state's reporting stations, please call (410) 213-1531 (MD) or (800) 338-7804 (NC). All other landings must be reported online at www.hmspermits.gov or by phone by calling the HMS Recreational Reporting Line at (888) 872-8862. If reporting by phone, the vessel owner will be asked to provide their name, phone number, HMS permit number, species caught, and size of fish. NMFS will return the call and provide a confirmation number for the reported landing. The reporting process is not complete until NMFS has supplied a confirmation number.

If contacted on the dock or by phone, recreational anglers must participate in the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS) or Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP, formerly MRFSS) to facilitate scientific research and catch monitoring on these species.

X. RECREATIONAL SWORDFISH FISHING

FISHING GEARS AND TECHNIQUES

Authorized fishing gears and permit(s) required for recreational harvest of Atlantic swordfish in federal waters are listed below. Detailed definitions of each gear type can be found in Section II.

Rod and reel: HMS Angling **OR** HMS Charter/Headboat **OR** Atlantic Tunas General category (when fishing in a registered Atlantic HMS Tournament).

Handline: HMS Angling **OR** HMS Charter/Headboat **OR** Atlantic Tunas General category (when fishing in a registered Atlantic HMS Tournament).

Fishermen may use rod and reel and handline gear to fish for Atlantic swordfish. Downriggers may be used when fishing hook and line gears. If handlines are used, they must remain attached to, or in contact with, the fishing vessel. Downriggers, wire lines, planers, or similar devices may **not** be used

while trolling in the Madison Swanson and Steamboat Lumps closed areas. Please see Section III for more information.

There are no restrictions on the types of hooks recreational fishermen may use to catch Atlantic swordfish. However, NMFS recommends that fishermen use circle hooks to reduce the mortality of released swordfish.

MINIMUM SIZES

There are two minimum size measurements for swordfish. One of these measurements will be used to determine if the swordfish is of legal size, depending on whether or not the head is naturally attached to the carcass.

47" (119 cm) lower jaw fork length (LJFL): Straight line measurement from the tip of the lower jaw to the fork of the tail. This measurement is used if head is naturally attached.

29" (73 cm) cleithrum to caudal keel (CK): Curved length measurement from cleithrum to caudal keel. This measurement is used if the head is removed prior to the time of landing. In the case of a swordfish that has been damaged by shark bites, the remainder of the carcass must be equal to or great than 29" CK.



Lower Jaw Fork Length (LJFL)



Cleithrum to Caudal Keel (CK)

RETENTION LIMITS

Recreational retention limits for swordfish depend upon the type of fishing permit that is possessed. Fishermen who possess an **HMS Angling permit**, or those fishing in a registered HMS tournament under an **Atlantic Tunas General category permit**, may keep one swordfish per person, up to a maximum of four per vessel per trip.

The **HMS Charter/Headboat permit** has different retention limits, depending upon whether the vessel is operating as a charter or headboat fishing vessel. Vessels fishing as **charter vessels**, must be less than 100 gross tons and meet the United States Coast Guard (USCG) requirements to carry six or fewer passengers for hire. Vessels fishing under these requirements are allowed to keep one swordfish per paying passenger, up to a maximum of six swordfish per trip. Vessels fishing as **headboat vessels** must have received a Certificate of Inspection from the USCG to carry passengers for hire. Vessels fishing under these requirements may keep one swordfish per paying passenger, up to a maximum of 15 swordfish per trip.

If an Atlantic swordfish is caught by a hook and not retained, the fish must be released by cutting the line near the hook or by using a dehooking device, in

either case without removing the fish from the water.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All recreationally landed non-tournament North Atlantic swordfish must be reported to NMFS by vessel owners or their designee within 24 hours of landing at the dock. For swordfish landed in Maryland or North Carolina, landings must be reported at state-operated reporting stations. For additional information on these state's reporting stations, please call (410) 213-1531 (MD) or (800) 338-7804 (NC). Landings outside Maryland or North Carolina must be reported online at www.hmspermits.gov, or by phone by calling the HMS Recreational Reporting Line at (888) 894-5528. If reporting by phone, the vessel owner will be asked to provide their name, phone number, HMS permit number, species caught, and size of fish. NMFS will return the call and provide a confirmation number for the reported landing. The reporting process is not complete until NMFS has supplied a confirmation number.

In Maryland and North Carolina, vessel owners must report their recreational swordfish landings at state-operated reporting stations. For additional information on these state's reporting stations, please call (410) 213-1531 (MD) or (800) 338-7804 (NC).

Landings from a registered Atlantic HMS tournament are exempt from the telephone call-in or internet reporting requirements because tournament operators are responsible for providing the information to NMFS, if selected for reporting. If a tournament operator fails to register a tournament and/or report a landed fish, it is the vessel owner's responsibility to report the landing.

If contacted on the dock or by phone, recreational anglers must cooperate in the Large Pelagic Survey (LPS) or Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP, formerly MRFSS) to facilitate scientific research and catch monitoring on these species.

LANDING REQUIREMENTS

Swordfish may be gutted and the head may be removed. Swordfish must remain in either round (whole) or dressed form through offloading. Swordfish may **not** be cut into pieces while at sea. If the head or tail of a swordfish has been removed prior to the time of landing, a minimum size of 29" (73 cm) from cleithrum to caudal keel (CK) shall be applied in all cases. If the head is not removed prior to the time of landing, a minimum size of 47" (119 cm) LJFL shall be applied in all cases. In the case of a swordfish that has been damaged by shark bites, the remainder of the carcass must be equal to or great than 29" CK.

OTHER RESTRICTIONS

In addition to the Tortugas Marine Reserves, Edges 40 Fathom Contour, and the Madison Swanson and Steamboat Lumps closed areas, recreational anglers may not land swordfish south of 5° N latitude.