

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) 713-2347.

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
- Dates
- Director name, contact information
- Target species

To register a tournament, please call the HMS office in St. Petersburg, FL at (727) 824-5399 to request a form, or download the registration form by clicking on “Reporting Forms” at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms or by clicking on “Tournaments” at www.hmspermits.gov. The completed tournament registration form may either be faxed or mailed back to the following address:

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

Upon receiving the form, NMFS will produce a tournament confirmation number and mail the number to the operator’s address. Please note that registration is not considered complete unless the operator has received a confirmation number from the HMS Management Division of NMFS.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

NMFS will notify tournament operators in writing if their tournament has been selected for reporting. If the tournament is selected, a reporting form and instructions will be sent to the operator. The reporting form must be returned to the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center in Miami, FL at the address specified on the form within 7 days after tournament fishing has been completed.

Please see 50 CFR part 635 for the current Atlantic HMS regulations, as regulations are subject to change. October 2008

Tournament registration and reporting is a critical component of the HMS monitoring program. The information collected is used to estimate tournament fishing effort and landings of HMS for stock assessments, national and international reports, and other monitoring efforts.

TOURNAMENT PARTICIPANTS

To participate in a registered Atlantic HMS tournament, fishermen must have either an HMS Angling, HMS Charter/Headboat, or Atlantic tunas General category permit. Atlantic tunas General category permit holders are prohibited from fishing under HMS Angling category regulations except when participating in a registered Atlantic HMS tournament. When fishing in a registered Atlantic HMS tournament, Atlantic tunas General category permit holders must comply with HMS Angling category regulations for swordfish, sharks, and billfish, and with General category regulations for Atlantic tunas (*i.e.*, General category permit holders may not fish for or land bluefin tuna <73” under any circumstances).

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS

All Atlantic HMS recreational fishing regulations (*e.g.*, size limits, bag limits, gear restrictions, possession restrictions) apply to Atlantic HMS tournament participants. Anglers fishing from Atlantic HMS permitted vessels and participating in Atlantic billfish tournaments must use only non-offset circle hooks when deploying natural bait or natural bait/artificial lure combinations. A billfish tournament is defined as any fishing tournament that awards points or prizes for billfish, even if billfish are not the main species targeted in the tournament. Billfish tournament anglers may deploy “J”-hooks only with artificial lures. NMFS encourages the use of circle hooks by non-tournament anglers to reduce post-release mortality of Atlantic billfish.