

## **IX. RECREATIONAL TUNA FISHING**

### **FISHING GEARS AND TECHNIQUES**

This compliance guide applies to federally managed Atlantic tunas including bigeye, albacore, yellowfin and skipjack tunas, collectively known by the acronym “BAYS,” and bluefin tuna. Authorized fishing gears and permit(s) required for recreational harvest of Atlantic tunas in federal waters are listed below. Detailed definitions of each gear type can be found in Section II.

**Bandit gear:** HMS Charter/Headboat Permit

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

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

**Speargun:** HMS Angling **OR** HMS Charter/Headboat. Can only be used for BAYS tunas (not bluefin tuna).

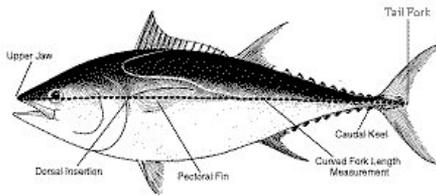
**Greenstick:** HMS Charter/Headboat **OR** Atlantic Tunas General category (if participating in a registered Atlantic HMS tournament).

An Atlantic Tunas General category permit may be used to fish for Atlantic tunas during a registered Atlantic HMS tournament; however, General category regulations, including authorized gears, techniques, and size limits apply. Bluefin tuna less than 73" may not be retained aboard Atlantic Tunas General category permitted vessels.

Fishermen may use rod and reel, greenstick, and handline gears to fish for Atlantic tunas. 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 that may be used to catch Atlantic tunas.

### **MINIMUM SIZES AND LANDING REQUIREMENTS**

The minimum size is 27 inches curved fork length (CFL) for bluefin, yellowfin, and bigeye tunas. There is currently no minimum size for albacore or skipjack tuna. All Atlantic tunas may be landed round with fins intact (except tail lobes which can be removed), or eviscerated with the head removed, as long as the fish remains within the specified minimum size. The tail and at least one pectoral fin must remain attached through landing; all other fins may be removed.



### Curved Fork Length (CFL)

#### **Tunas with heads on**

CFL is the sole measurement for determining the size class of whole (with head on) Atlantic tunas. The measurement must be taken in a line, tracing the contour (*i.e.*, curve) of the body from the tip of the upper jaw to the fork of the tail, which abuts the dorsal insertion of the pectoral fin and the dorsal side of the caudal keel.

#### **Tunas with heads removed**

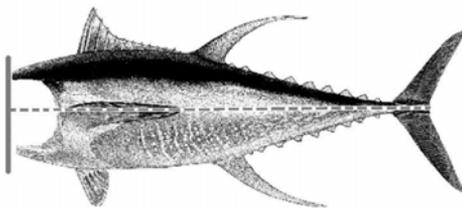
For tunas with the heads removed, pectoral fin curved fork length (PFCFL) may be taken and multiplied by a conversion factor of 1.35 to obtain total curved fork length. The PFCFL measurement must be taken from the dorsal insertion of the pectoral fin, tracing the contour of the body, to the fork of the tail. (**NOTE: The tape must run along the outer surface of the pectoral fin.**)

#### **Bluefin tuna**

No person shall retain, or possess a **bluefin tuna** with the head removed that is less than 20 inches (51 cm) pectoral fin curved length.

#### **Bigeye and yellowfin tuna**

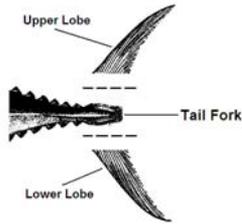
No person may remove the head of a **bigeye tuna** or **yellowfin tuna** if the remaining portion would be less than 27 inches (69 cm) from the fork of the tail to the forward edge of the cut (see image below).



Forward edge of the cut

#### **Tail trimming**

The upper and lower lobes of the tuna tail may be removed for storage purposes as long as the fork of the tail remains intact.



Trimmed Tuna Tail

## **RETENTION LIMITS**

### **BAYS tunas**

Three yellowfin tuna may be retained per person per day. There are no retention limits for albacore, bigeye, and skipjack tuna.

### **Bluefin tuna**

Recreational bluefin tuna retention limits depend on the size class of bluefin tuna. Size classes consist of school bluefin tuna with a CFL  $\geq 27''$  to  $< 47''$ , large school bluefin tuna with a CFL  $\geq 47''$  to  $< 59''$ , and small medium bluefin tuna with a CFL  $\geq 59''$  to  $< 73''$ . Recreational anglers need to check the websites or call the telephone numbers below for current retention limits for these size classes. In addition to the daily bluefin tuna retention limits, vessels permitted to fish recreationally may retain one bluefin tuna per year that measures  $\geq 73''$  CFL per year, as a "trophy" fish. In the Gulf of Mexico, this trophy fish is only allowed if caught incidentally while targeting other species. No sale of bluefin tuna caught on Angling Category permitted vessels is allowed. For Charter/Headboat category vessels, see the Atlantic HMS Commercial Compliance Guide concerning sale of Atlantic tunas.

### **Important notes:**

1. Bluefin tuna retention limits may change through out the season. For up-to-date information please visit [www.hmspermits.gov](http://www.hmspermits.gov), or call the Atlantic Tunas Information line at (888) 872-8862 or call (978) 281-9260.
2. Atlantic Tunas General category permit holders may never retain a bluefin tuna  $< 73''$  CFL, even when recreationally fishing in a registered HMS tournament. When tournament fishing, General category permit holders must abide by commercial regulations for Atlantic tunas.
3. Targeting bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico is **prohibited**. See Section III. For further information.

If an Atlantic tuna 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. A careful handling and

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](http://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