

Science, Service, Stewardship



Swordfish Fishery Revitalization Overview

HMS Advisory Panel Meeting
April 5-7, 2011

**NOAA
FISHERIES
SERVICE**



Regulatory Background Summary

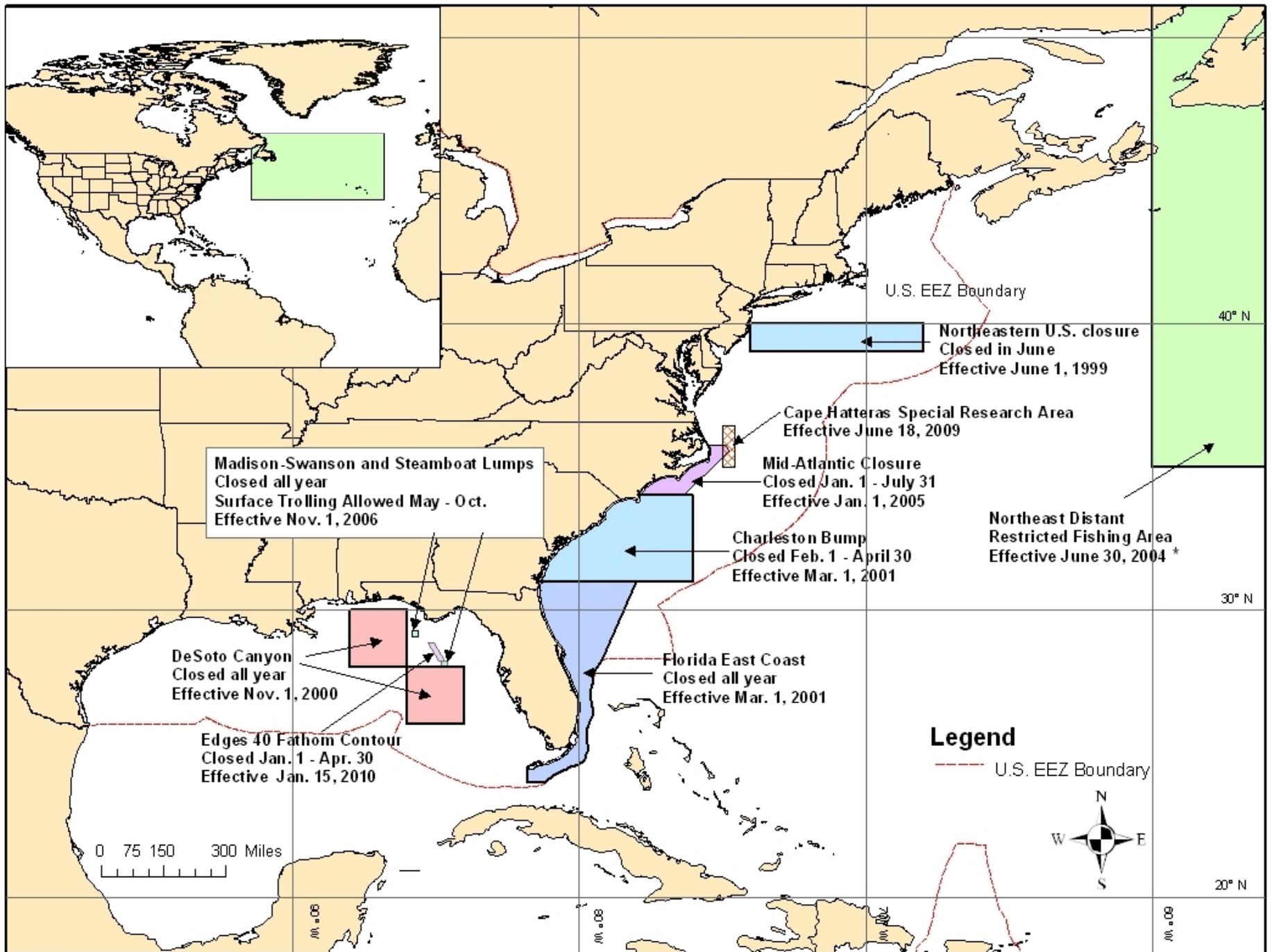
1985: First SWO FMP Developed (joint Council effort)

1999: Tuna, SWO & Shark FMP Developed

- Limited access permits
- VMS & Dealer reporting
- Northeast June PLL area closure

2000 - 2001: Regulatory Amendment to 1999 FMP

- Live bait prohibition in GOM to reduce billfish bycatch
- Three PLL area closures to reduce bycatch of undersized swordfish and all HMS (Desoto Canyon (Nov. 2000); Charleston Bump & East Florida Coast (March 2001))





Sea Turtle Bycatch Issues

2002: Portion of NED closed to PLL vessels; dip nets and line cutters become required equipment

2001 – 2003: Joint NOAA/industry NED research conducted to reduce sea turtle interactions and mortalities

June 2004: PLL BiOp concludes that the PLL fishery is not likely to jeopardize loggerheads, but is likely to jeopardize leatherbacks. Current ITS established

July 2004: To avoid jeopardy, NMFS implements PLL circle hooks & bait requirements, requires careful handling and release tools, requires sea turtle placards and adherence to protocols, reopens NED w/ 18⁰ circle hooks & bait requirements (69 FR 40734)

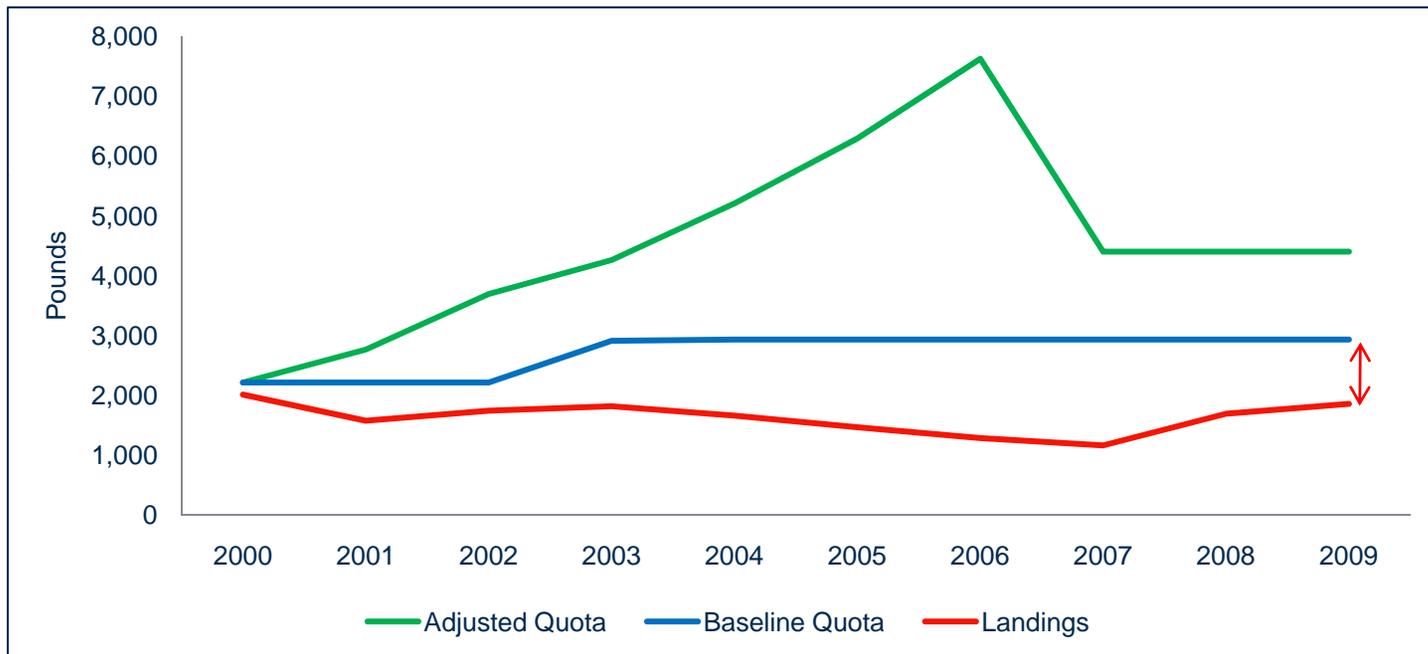


2006 Consolidated HMS FMP

- Implemented mandatory safe handling and release workshops for PLL and BLL vessel owners and operators.
 - These efforts are ongoing and result in certification of the entire PLL fleet since 2006.
 - Keeps fleet operating in accordance with the 2004 PLL BiOp.
- Authorized buoy gear in the commercial SWO directed fishery for SWO Directed & SWO Handgear permits only

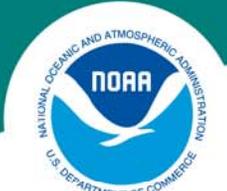


Challenges: Attainment of U.S. Swordfish Quota

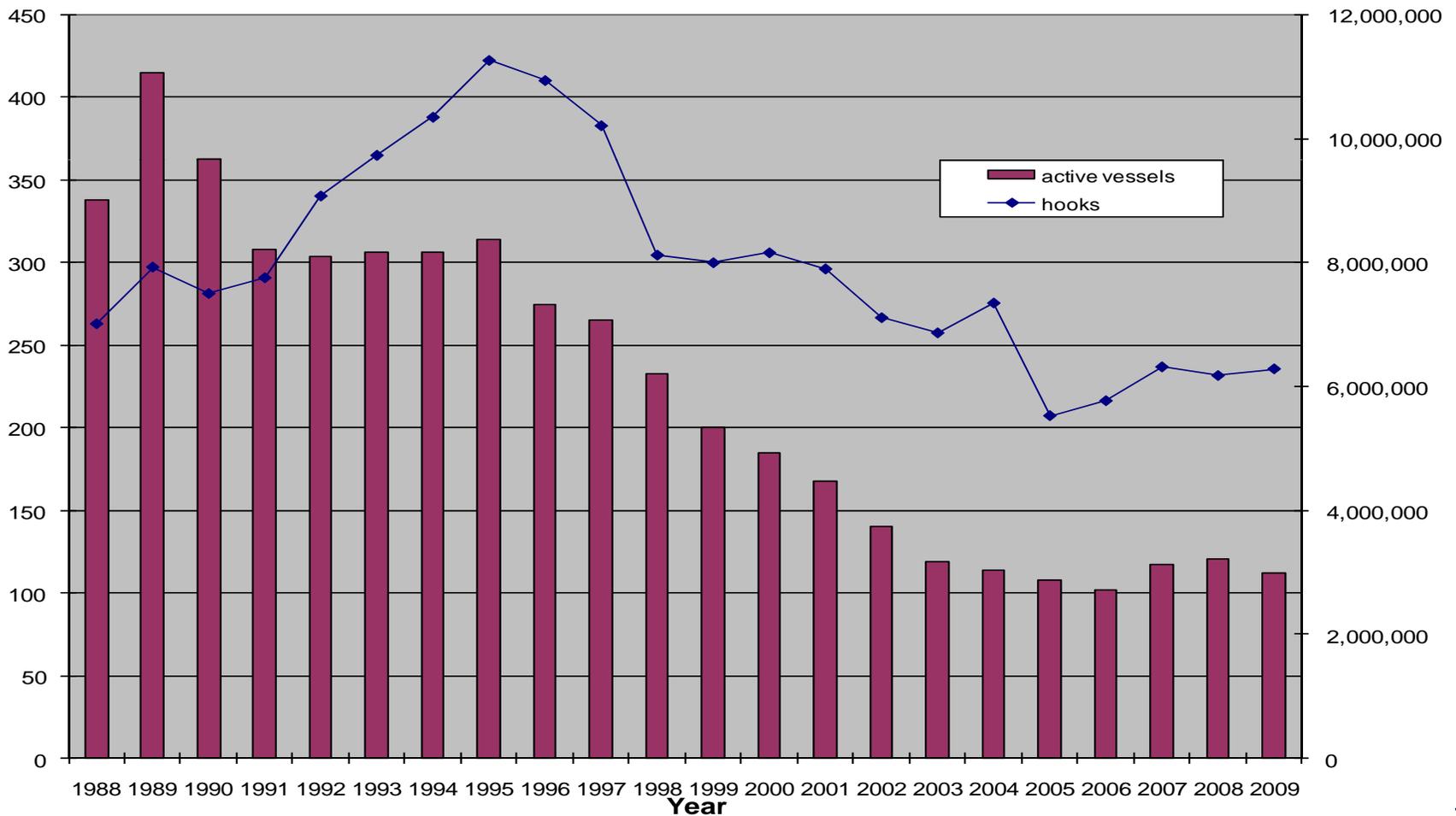


2009 = 42% of adjusted quota and 63% of baseline quota.

One of the ongoing challenges is for the U.S. to attain its SWO quota even though 2009 landings were the highest since 2000



Challenges: Number of Active SWO PLL Vessels



Source: 2009 ICCAT National Report



Challenges: Provide Additional Opportunities in U.S. Commercial SWO Fishery

- A combination of factors have contributed to the U.S. SWO landings being below the quota:
 - Conservation and Management measures for various species
 - Increased fuel prices
 - Low ex-vessel prices
 - Competition from less expensive, more available, imports



SWO Regulatory and Administrative Actions Since 2006 FMP

- June 2007: Swordfish Revitalization Final Rule (72 FR 31688)
 - Amended vessel upgrading restrictions for PLL vessels
 - One-time upgrade restriction removed for all LAPs
 - Increased incidental and recreational retention limits
- July 2008: Final rule (73 FR 38144) to allow Atlantic tunas longline LAPs that had been expired for more than one year to be renewed by the most recent permit holder
- May 2009: Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Plan final rule
- December 2009: At recommendation of HMS Advisory Panel, the Atlantic Tunas Longline permit was moved to SE Permits Office



Other Swordfish Revitalization Efforts (Non-Regulatory)

- In 2008 and 2009, NMFS featured swordfish at several prominent seafood trade shows and food marketing events (Boston, Brussels, New Orleans)
- In 2008, NMFS developed 1-page swordfish fact sheet
- In 2008, NMFS met with industry representatives to discuss swordfish marketing
- In 2008, NMFS created Fish Watch and Fish Watch Fact Sheet (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/species/n_atl_swordfish.htm)
- Industry efforts: brochure and outreach

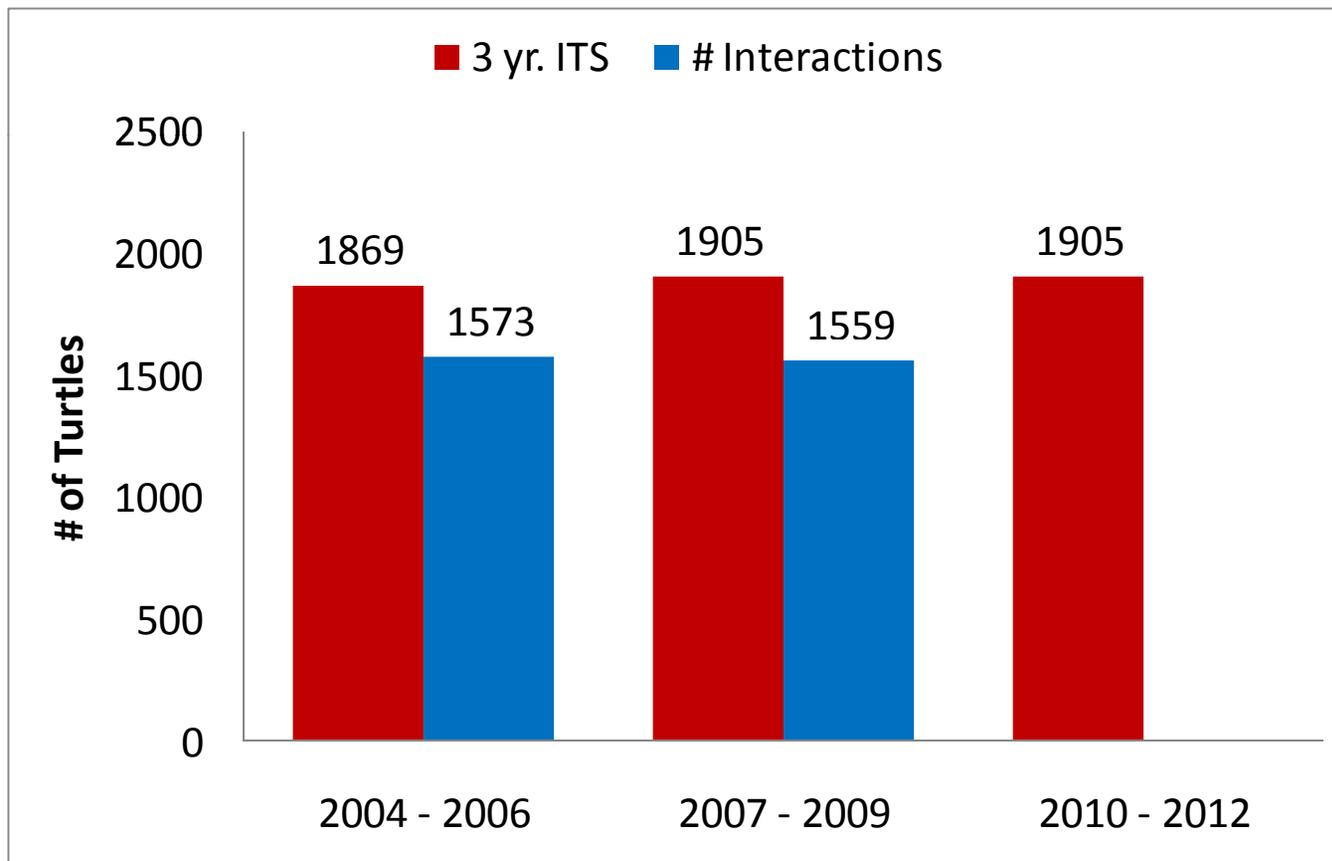


Challenges: Ongoing Sea Turtle Bycatch Issues

- March 2010: FWS/NMFS proposed to list the Northwest Atlantic loggerhead sea turtle distinct population segment as “endangered”
 - Comment Period Extended to April 11, 2011
 - Decision expected September 2011
- Incidental takes of loggerhead and leatherback sea turtles in pelagic longline fishery near ITS levels

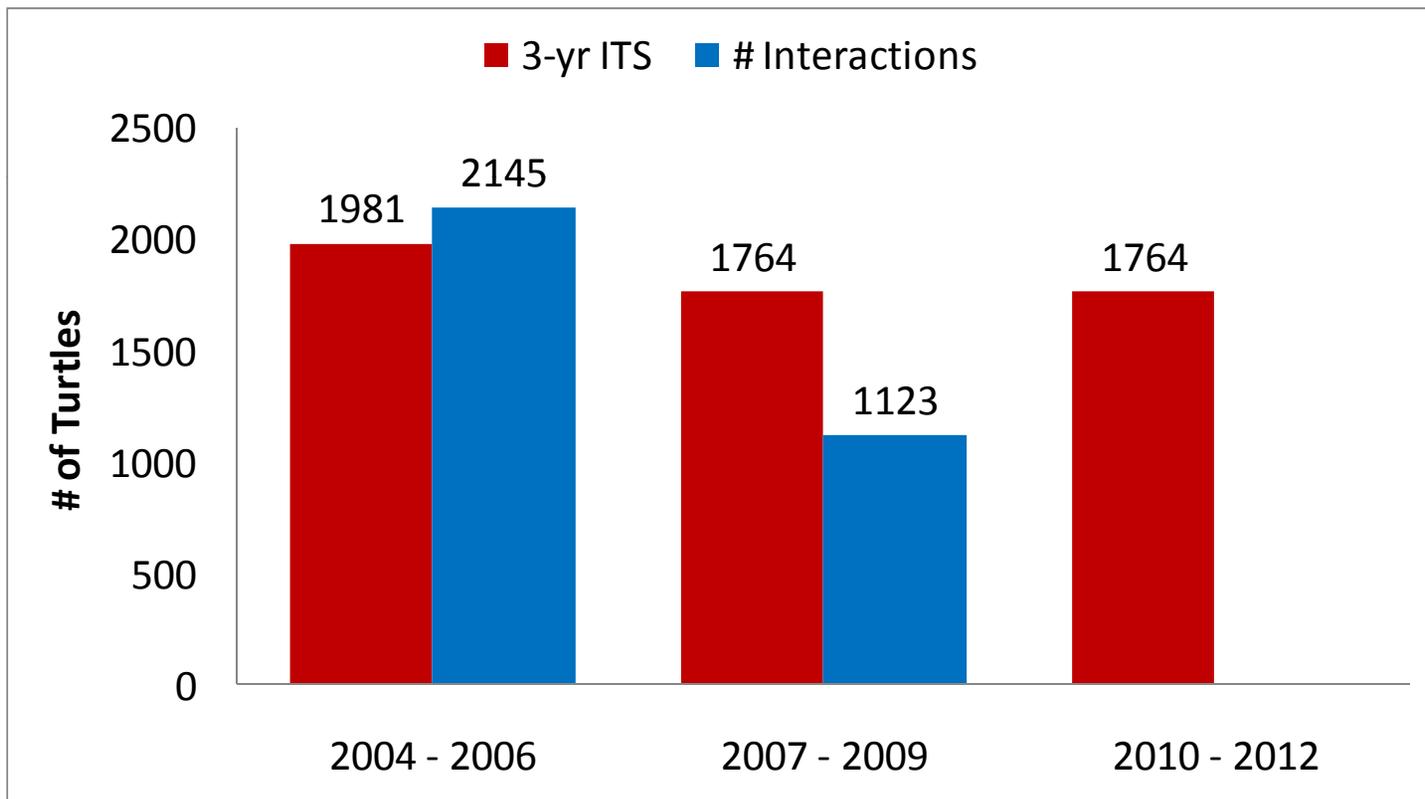


Loggerhead Sea Turtles





Leatherback Sea Turtles



* Over 47% of interactions during 2004-2006 occurred prior to implementation of circle hooks in Q3 2004



Challenges: PLL Bluefin Tuna Landings & Quota Allocation

2009 Longline Category Landings*	# of Bluefin Tuna	Weight (lb)	Avg. Weight (lb)	Weight (mt)	Quota (mt)	% Quota Taken
Longline	601	285,682	475.3	129.6	99.3	130.5%
-North	398	167,299	420.3	75.9	54.7	138.7%
-South	203	118,383	583.2	53.7	44.6	120.4%

* Dead discards for 2009 were 160 mt and must be accounted for.



Challenges: Provide Additional Opportunities in U.S. Commercial SWO Fishery

- In summary, the North Atlantic SWO stock is rebuilt but U.S. SWO landings are below the ICCAT quota
- NMFS must consider several important priorities when managing HMS fisheries including:
 - Reduction of bycatch and bycatch mortality
 - Undersized target species
 - Bluefin tuna
 - Billfish
 - Sea turtles and marine mammals
 - Rebuilding overfished stocks in Atlantic HMS fisheries such as bluefin tuna and billfish



Swordfish Fishery Revitalization – Ideas To Date

- Conduct research in closed areas
- SWO marketing
- Permit renewal and re-issuing expired permits
- Relieving upgrade restrictions
- Permitting for SWO retention in squid trawls
- General Commercial Handgear Permit
- Individual Bycatch Caps
- Electronic Monitoring

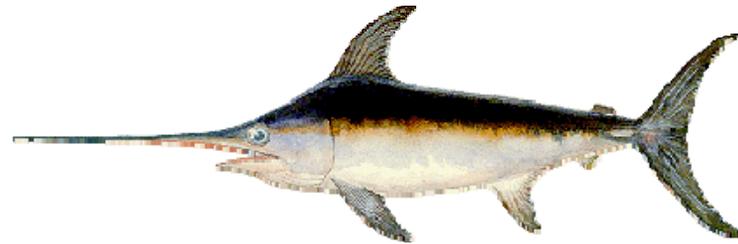


Swordfish Fishery Revitalization – Ideas To Date continued

- Pelagic longline closed areas should be reopened
- Swordfish incidental permit holders should be allowed to use buoy gear
- Vessel length and horsepower upgrade restrictions on Swordfish Handgear permitted vessels should be removed
- More buoy gear should be allowed to be used by SWO Handgear permitted vessels
- Limited access permit leasing should be allowed to improve access to the fishery
- Increase reporting of all SWO landings



Looking Forward



- **All Things Considered:**

- Rebuilt SWO stock
- Quota underharvest continue
- Bycatch constraints/concerns – Sea turtles, BFT, BLF, mammals
- Requests for additional opportunities in the SWO fishery – HMS GCHP, SWO Incidental buoy gear, PLL closures, Vessel upgrading, Permit leasing, etc.
- Closed Area Research results

- **Future Actions?**