

Science, Service, Stewardship



Predraft for Amendment 8 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP

Commercial Swordfish Permit Concept

Highly Migratory Species
Management Division
NMFS/NOAA

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March 14, 2012



Background

- **Part of Ongoing Process to Revitalize the U.S. Swordfish Fishery and Streamline Permit Issuance**
 - PLL Vessel Upgrading Regulations and Trip Limits (2007)
 - Atlantic Tunas Longline Permit Renewal Regulations (2008)
 - Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (2009)
 - Relocation of Atlantic Tunas Longline Permit to SERO (2010)
 - Incidental HMS Squid Trawl Permit (2011)
 - Discussions at 2009, 2010, and 2011 HMS AP Meetings



Outline of Predraft

- **Introduction and Need for Action**
- **Range of Potential Alternatives**
 - Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears
 - Commercial Catch Reporting
 - Swordfish Retention Limits
 - Alternatives Considered But Not Currently Anticipated to be Further Analyzed

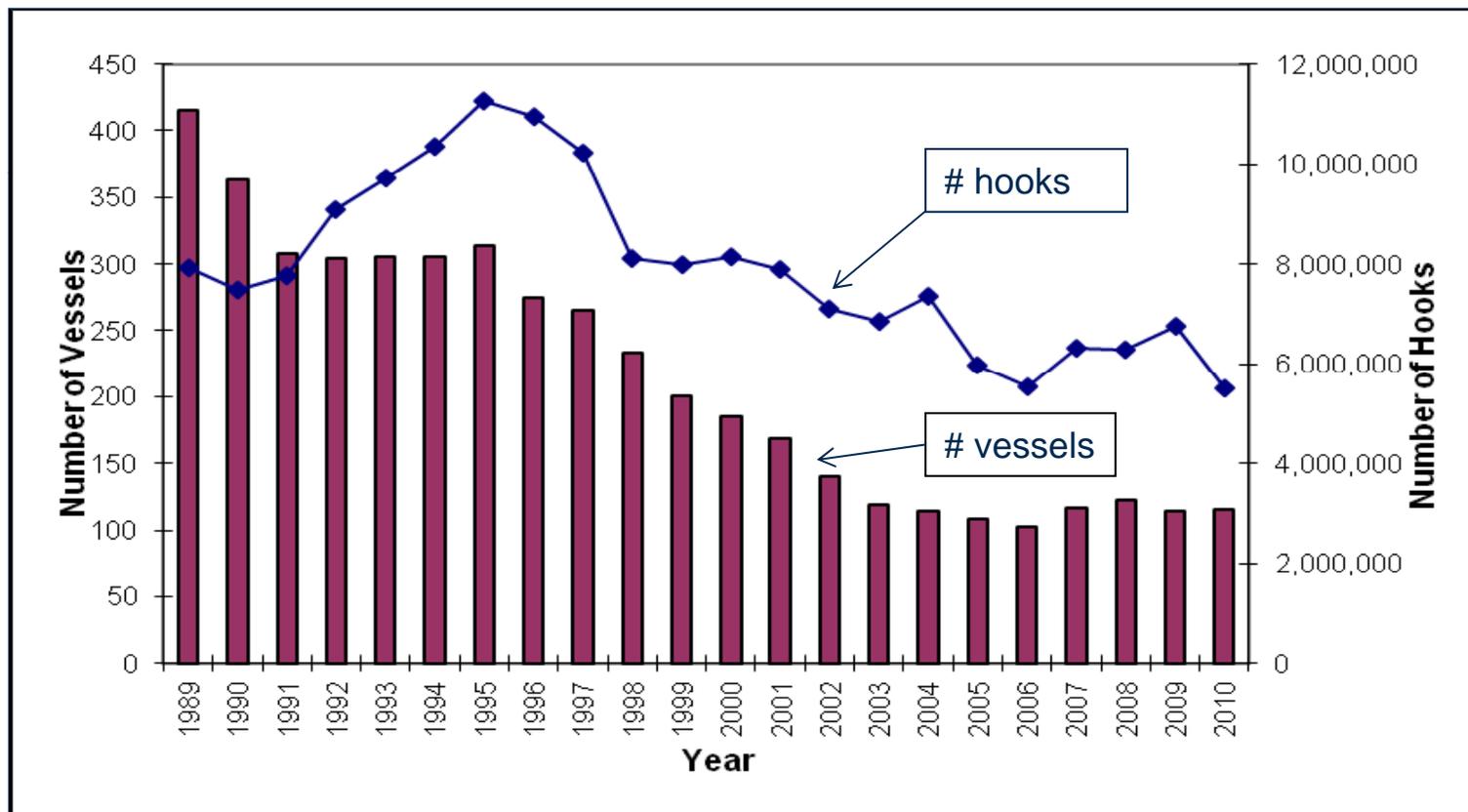


Current Issues in U.S. North Atlantic Swordfish Fishery

- Swordfish stock is fully rebuilt ($B_{2009}/B_{MSY} = 1.05$)
 - Persistent U.S. swordfish quota underharvests (~ 56% of baseline in 2011)
 - Difficult to obtain existing swordfish limited access permits (LAPs)
 - SFD – 178 permits*
 - SFI – 67 permits*
 - SFH – 78 permits*
- * As of October 2011
- NMFS continues to receive requests (including from HMS AP) to provide more opportunities to use rod & reel, handline, harpoon, bandit gear, and other gear to commercially harvest swordfish



Number of Swordfish Vessels and Hooks Fished (1989 – 2010)*

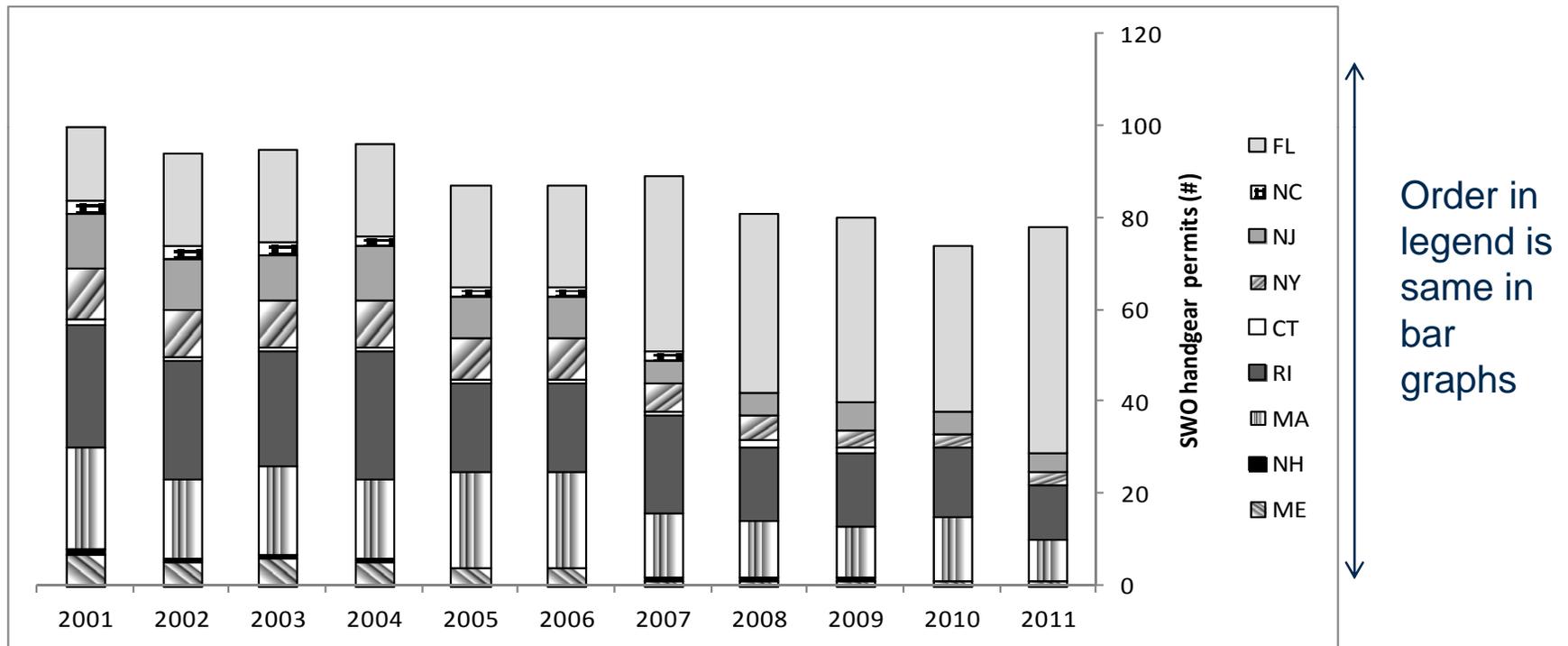


*Landed at least one swordfish

➤ Declining trend since 1995, but active vessels stable since 2003



Trends in Swordfish Handgear LAP Distribution* (2001 - 2011)

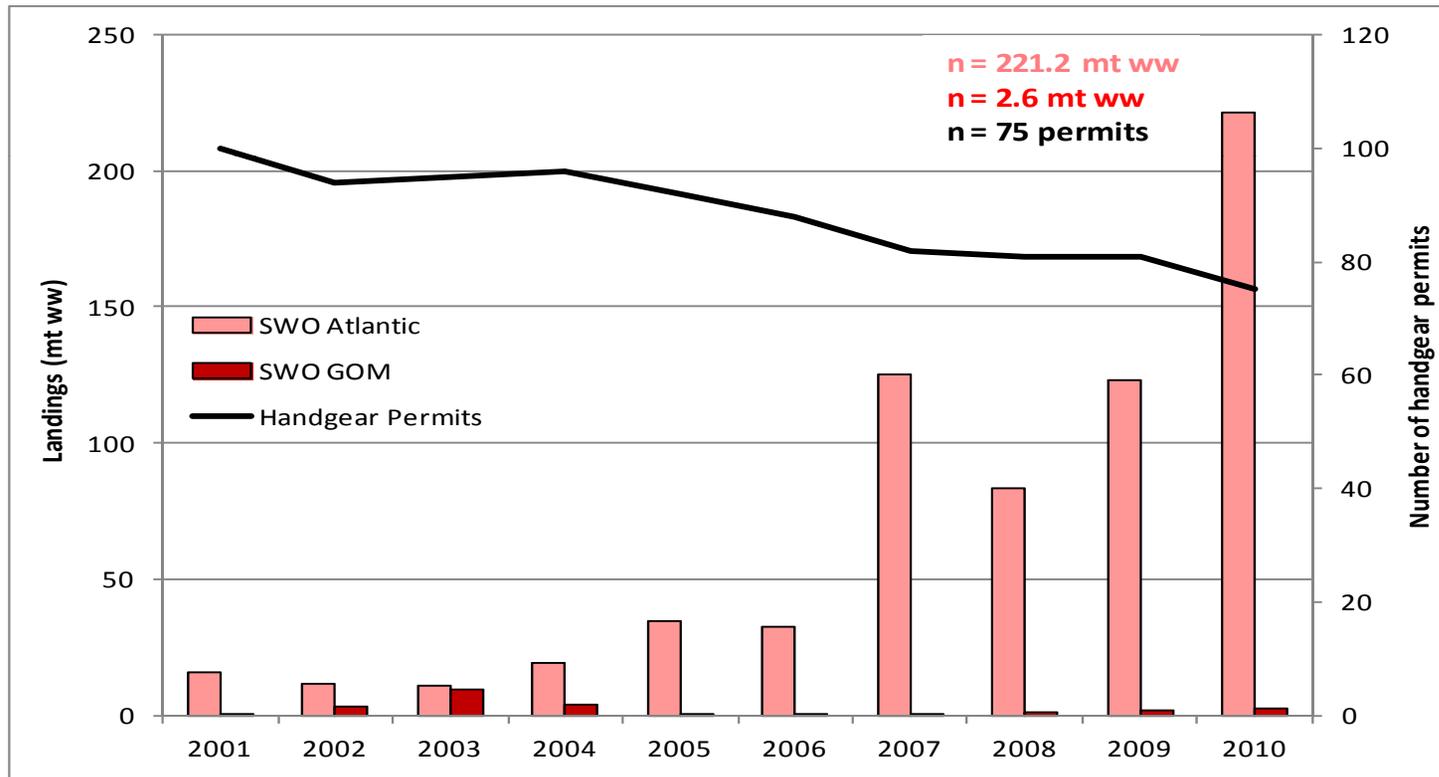


*Swordfish Handgear LAP authorizes use of buoy gear

➤ Currently, over ½ of all Swordfish Handgear LAPs are in Florida, indicating significance of the area



Trends in Swordfish Handgear LAPs and Landings (2001 - 2010)*

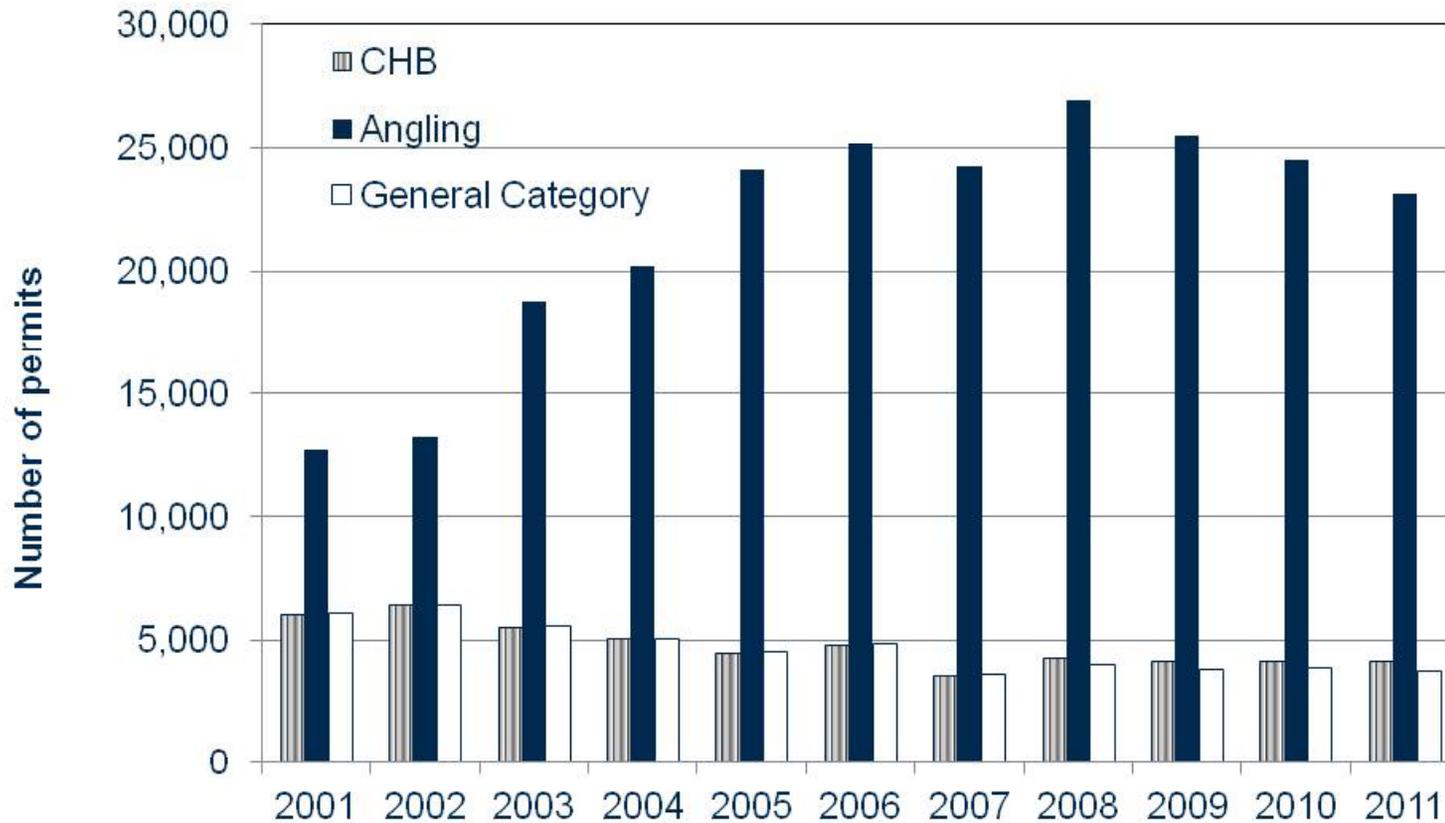


* Includes landings from buoy gear

➤ Swordfish Handgear landings have increased since 2006



Trends in HMS CHB, Angling, and General Category Permits 2001-2011



Current Open Access HMS Handgear Permits



Need for Action

- Domestic management measures and market factors have impacted ability of U.S. fleet to fully harvest its ICCAT swordfish quota allocation.
- Other ICCAT parties have requested additional North Atlantic swordfish quota to be transferred from U.S. allocation.
- Management measures to provide additional opportunities to harvest swordfish could increase landings and more fully utilize the North Atlantic swordfish quota allocation.



Swordfish Handgear Fishery

- Rod and Reel, Handline, Harpoon, Bandit Gear
 - Green-Stick, while rarely used, IS analyzed in pre-draft
 - Buoy gear is NOT currently analyzed in pre-draft

- Handgears are “tended,” highly selective with regard to target species, and may have lower post-release mortality on undersized fish and protected resources
 - ESA – Low bycatch interaction rates
 - MMPA - Category III fishery
 - EFH - Low risk of impacts

- Handgears may provide an opportunity to more fully harvest quota
 - 2011: Handgears accounted for ~ 5% of commercial swordfish landings



Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears

Alt. 1.1 – No Action: Maintain current SWO LAP program

Alt. 1.2 – Establish Open Access Commercial SWO Permit

- 1.2.1 – Add swordfish to existing Atlantic Tunas General Category permit
- 1.2.2 - Create a new separate open access swordfish permit
- 1.2.3 - Allow CHB permit holders to fish under open access swordfish commercial regulations when not on a for-hire trip.
- 1.2.4 - Add swordfish to existing Atlantic Tunas Harpoon category permit

Alt. 1.3 – Establish New Limited Access Commercial SWO
Permit



Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Alternative 1.1 (no action) –</p> <p>Maintain current swordfish LAP program and do not establish a new or revised swordfish commercial permit(s)</p> | <p>- No change in ecological impacts</p> <p>-Potential negative ecological impacts if U.S. SWO quota were distributed to other ICCAT CPCs</p> | <p>- High barrier for entry into commercial swordfish fishery</p> <p>- Loss of potential income by fishermen that want to commercially fish for swordfish</p> |



Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Alternative 1.2 –</p> <p>Establish an <u>open-access</u> commercial swordfish permit that would authorize rod & reel, handline, bandit gear, harpoon, and green-stick gear</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential increase in swordfish landings, commercial fishing effort, discards, and discard mortality - Could help protect U.S. swordfish quota | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Removes some barriers to entry into commercial swordfish fishery - Could disadvantage current commercial swordfish LAP holders |



Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Sub-Alternative 1.2.1 –</p> <p>Add swordfish to the existing open access Atlantic Tunas General category permit</p> | <p>-Reduces ability to differentiate between tuna and swordfish fishermen for analytical and fishery management purposes</p> | <p>- Minimizes costs for persons who already possess the Atlantic Tunas General category permit and streamlines permit issuance</p> |



Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Sub-Alternative 1.2.2 –</p> <p>Create new open access commercial swordfish permit</p> | <p>- Provides ability to differentiate between tuna and swordfish fishermen for analytical and management purposes</p> | <p>-Increases costs for obtaining the new permit for persons who already possess the Atlantic Tunas General category permit</p> <p>- Does not streamline permit issuance</p> |



Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Sub-Alternative 1.2.3 –</p> <p>Allow HMS CHB permit holders to fish under open-access swordfish commercial regulations when not on a for-hire trip</p> | <p>- Potential increase in swordfish landings, commercial fishing effort, discards, and discard mortality</p> <p>-Could help protect U.S. swordfish quota</p> | <p>-Would provide economic benefits to CHB permit holders when fishing commercially</p> <p>-Could streamline permit issuance</p> |



Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Sub-Alternative 1.2.4 –</p> <p>Add swordfish to the existing open access Atlantic Tunas Harpoon category permit</p> | <p>-Reduces ability to differentiate between tuna and swordfish harpooners for analytical and fishery management purposes</p> | <p>-Provides benefits and minimize costs for persons who already possess the Atlantic Tunas Harpoon category permit</p> <p>-Streamlines permit issuance</p> |



Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting and Authorized Gears

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Alternative 1.3 – Establish new <u>limited access</u> commercial swordfish permit that would authorize rod & reel, handline, bandit gear, harpoon and green-stick</p> | <p>-Similar impacts as open access permit, but any potential increase in fishing effort could be reduced because of fewer permits</p> | <p>- Removes some current barriers to entry to fishery</p> <p>- Could reduce negative impacts on current LAP holders</p> <p>- Could increase administrative costs and burden on public to qualify for LAP</p> |



Potential Alternatives Commercial Catch Reporting

- Alt. 2.1 – Require that all swordfish sold under the new/modified permit(s) be sold only to permitted swordfish dealers
- Alt. 2.2 – Require that swordfish sold under the new/modified permit(s) be reported in HMS logbooks, if selected, and that all sales be only to permitted swordfish dealers
- Alt. 2.3 – Require that swordfish be tagged prior to offloading and that all sales be only to permitted swordfish dealers
- 2.3.1 - Swordfish landed by vessels with new/modified permit(s) be tagged
 - 2.3.2 - Swordfish commercially landed with gears other than PLL be tagged
 - 2.3.3 - All commercially-landed swordfish be tagged



Potential Alternatives Commercial Catch Reporting

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Alternative 2.1 –</p> <p>Require that all swordfish sold under the new/modified permit(s) be sold only to permitted HMS swordfish dealers</p> | <p>-Provides basic information for quota monitoring and stock assessments</p> | <p>-Maintains current reporting burden on dealers</p> <p>-No administrative change</p> |



Potential Alternatives Commercial Catch Reporting

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Alternative 2.2 –</p> <p>Require that swordfish sold under new/modified permit(s) be reported in HMS logbooks, if selected, <u>and</u> that sales be only to permitted swordfish dealers</p> | <p>-Provides basic information for quota monitoring & stock assessments</p> <p>- Could provide additional information , <u>if</u> selected (i.e., fishing effort and HMS catch and discard)</p> | <p>-Additional reporting and administrative burden <u>if</u> selected; otherwise, same reporting burden</p> <p>-Maintains current reporting burden on swordfish dealers</p> |



Potential Alternatives Commercial Catch Reporting

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Alternative 2.3 –</p> <p>Require that swordfish be <u>tagged</u> prior to offloading for some or all commercial swordfish permit holders and that all sales be only to permitted swordfish dealers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provides basic information for quota monitoring & stock assessments -Could provide additional data and benefit future stock assessments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Additional reporting burden on commercial fishermen and dealers -Improved enforcement -Increased administrative costs |



Potential Alternatives Commercial Catch Reporting

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|--|---|
| Alternative 2.3.1 - Only swordfish landed by vessels issued new or modified permit(s) tagged | -Same as Alternative 2.3 | -Possible confusion because not all swordfish tagged |
| Alternative 2.3.2 - All swordfish commercially landed using gears other than PLL tagged | - <u>Higher level of reporting</u> because <u>more</u> fish tagged | - <u>Less</u> confusion because <u>only PLL exempt</u> , but higher burden |
| Alternative 2.3.3 – All commercially-landed swordfish tagged | - <u>Highest level of reporting</u> because <u>all</u> fish tagged | - <u>Least</u> confusion because <u>all</u> fish tagged, but highest burden |



Potential Alternatives Swordfish Retention Limits

Alt. 3.1 - Coast wide 0-6 fish retention limit for all persons with new/modified permit(s); and codify a specific limit within this range

Alt. 3.2 – Codify a coast wide 0-6 fish retention limit for all persons with new/modified permit(s); with in-season adjustment authority to change limit based on pre-established criteria (*i.e.*, rate of landings, attainment of quota, bycatch of juveniles, etc.)

Alt. 3.3 - Establish regions and codify a 0-6 fish retention limit for all persons with new/modified permit(s); with in-season adjustment authority to change the limit regionally based on pre-established criteria (*i.e.*, rate of landings, attainment of quota, bycatch of juveniles, etc.) .



Potential Alternatives Swordfish Retention Limits

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Alternative 3.1 –</p> <p>Establish coast wide 0 – 6 fish retention limit range for all persons issued the new or modified permit(s), but codify a specific limit in that range</p> | <p>-Possible increase in fishing effort, discards and discard mortality</p> | <p>-Positive economic benefits for some fishermen</p> <p>-Provides certainty with regard to swordfish retention limit</p> <p>-No ability to quickly modify limit</p> |



Potential Alternatives Swordfish Retention Limits

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Alternative 3.2 –</p> <p>Codify coast wide 0 – 6 fish swordfish retention limit range for all persons issued the new or modified permit(s) with in-season adjustment authority to change limit based on pre-established criteria</p> | <p>-Same as Alternative 3.1</p> <p>-Provides ability for NMFS to quickly adjust limit so any potential adverse ecological impacts could be quickly addressed, if necessary</p> | <p>-Same as Alternative 3.1</p> <p>-Less certainty regarding retention limit</p> <p>-Increased administrative burden to monitor adjustment criteria</p> |



Potential Alternatives Swordfish Retention Limits

| Alternative | Ecological Impacts | Social/Economic Impacts |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Alternative 3.3 –</p> <p>Establish regions and codify 0 – 6 fish retention limit range with in-season authority to change the limit regionally based on pre-established criteria</p> | <p>- Same as Alternative 3.1</p> <p>-Provides NMFS with ability to quickly adjust retention limit on a regional basis</p> | <p>- Same as Alternative 3.1</p> <p>-Provides less certainty regarding retention limit</p> <p>-Increased administrative burden to monitor adjustment criteria regionally</p> |



Alternatives Considered But Not Currently Anticipated to be Further Analyzed

- 1) Prohibit night-time swordfishing with the new permit
 - Difficult to enforce (lines out at sunset) and distinguish from other legal nighttime fishing activity
 - Inconsistent with regulations for other swordfish permits

- 2) Establish a 5-year sunset provision for management measures.
 - Not needed at this time; NMFS could amend regulations if necessary
 - Could create uncertainty for persons interested in new permit



Potential Timeframe

- **Informal Scoping** – June 2009 ANPR, Sept 2011 AP meeting, Other AP meetings
- **Predraft**: March 14, 2012 (Seeking AP comment)
- **Potential Draft Environmental Assessment and Proposed Rule**: ~ Late Summer 2012
- **Potential Public Hearings**: ~ Fall 2012
- **Potential Final EA and Final Rule**: ~Spring 2013
- **Potential Effective Date**: ~ Summer 2013

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Questions?

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Thank You
We Value Your Input!

- Should NMFS proceed with action to create (or modify) a permit(s) that would provide for additional commercial harvest of swordfish with handgear?
 - Permitting – New permit or add to Atlantic Tunas General category and Harpoon category? Charter/Headboats?
 - Catch Reporting – Logbooks (if selected)? Tags?
 - Retention Limits – At what level? Coastwide limit? Regional limits? In-Season Adjustment Authority?
 - Additional Alternatives?



Latest Swordfish Stock Assessments

Source: ICCAT SCRS

| | 2006 Assessment | 2009 Assessment |
|--|---|---|
| Current Relative Biomass Level | $B_{06}/B_{MSY} = 0.99$ (0.87 - 1.27) | $B_{2009}/B_{MSY} = 1.05$ (0.94-1.24) |
| Current Relative Fishing Mortality Rate | $F_{05}/F_{MSY} = 0.86$ (0.65 - 1.04) | $F_{08}/F_{MSY} = 0.76$ (0.67 – 0.96) |
| <i>Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold</i> | F_{MSY} – not estimated | $F_{MSY} = 0.22$ (0.14-0.27) |
| Maximum Sustainable Yield | 14,133 mt (12,800 - 14,790) | 13,370 mt (13,020 – 14,182) |
| Current Yield | 11,938 mt | 12,154 mt |
| Outlook – Status of Stock | <i>Stock nearly rebuilt; overfishing is not occurring</i> | <i>Stock rebuilt; not overfished, overfishing not occurring</i> |