



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

Proposed Rule to Remove Upgrade Restrictions for Vessels Issued Swordfish Directed and Atlantic Tunas Longline Category Permits

Atlantic Highly Migratory
Species Management Division

September 7, 2016

OUTLINE

- **Background (1999 to Present)**
 - Fleet Capacity Concerns, Overfishing, Bycatch Issues
 - Current Status of HMS Pelagic Longline Fishery
- **Proposed Regulatory Changes**
 - Removal of Vessel Upgrade Restrictions for Swordfish Directed and Atlantic Tunas Longline Category Permits
- **Ecological & Socio-Economic Impacts**
- **Information on Submitting Comments**

BACKGROUND

1999 FMP for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, & Sharks

- HMS pelagic longline (PLL) fleet was overcapitalized
 - > 2,000 open-access swordfish permits issued (pre-1999)
- Temporary swordfish closures in 1995 & 1997 due to quota overages
- Swordfish were overfished ($B/B_{msy} = 0.715$) with overfishing occurring ($F/F_{msy} = 1.169$)
- ICCAT Recommendation 99-02 → Intl. SWO Rebuilding Plan
- Concerns about bycatch of undersized swordfish, billfish, and protected species

BACKGROUND

1999 FMP for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, & Sharks

- In addition to other effort controls, NMFS implemented limited access permits (LAPs) for many commercial Atlantic tunas, swordfish, and shark fishing activities in 1999
 - Qualification Criteria
 - Vessel Upgrade Limits (measured relative to “baseline”)*
 - 10% - length, gross registered tonnage (GRT), net tonnage (NT)
 - 20% - horsepower (HP)
- These upgrade limits were selected, in part, to be consistent with NEFMC and MAFMC restrictions at the time

*** Baseline = Specifications of vessel initially issued LAP**

BACKGROUND

Other PLL effort controls implemented since 1999 include:

- *Seasonal and year-round PLL closed areas*
- *PLL gear restrictions (non-stainless circle hooks & weak hooks)*
- *PLL live bait prohibition in Gulf of Mexico*
- *Bait restrictions (whole finfish and/or squid)*
- *Individual Bluefin Tuna Quotas (IBQ)*
- *Prohibited species, minimum sizes, retention limits*

BACKGROUND

Current Status of HMS PLL Fishery

- Overall decline in number of “active” PLL vessels*
 - **From 200 vessels (1999) to 104 vessels (2015)**
- Overall decline in number of swordfish directed and incidental permits
 - **From 451 permits (1999) to 260 permits (2015)**
- Persistent underharvest of U.S. North Atlantic swordfish quota
- Change in status of North Atlantic swordfish stock (2009)
 - **Not overfished ($B_{2011}/B_{msy} = 1.14$)**
 - **No overfishing ($F_{2011}/F_{msy} = 0.82$)**

* “Active” refers to vessels that landed swordfish

BACKGROUND

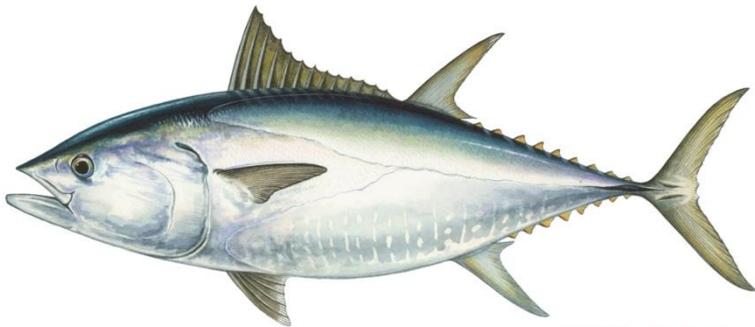
Current Status of HMS PLL Fishery

In Summary....

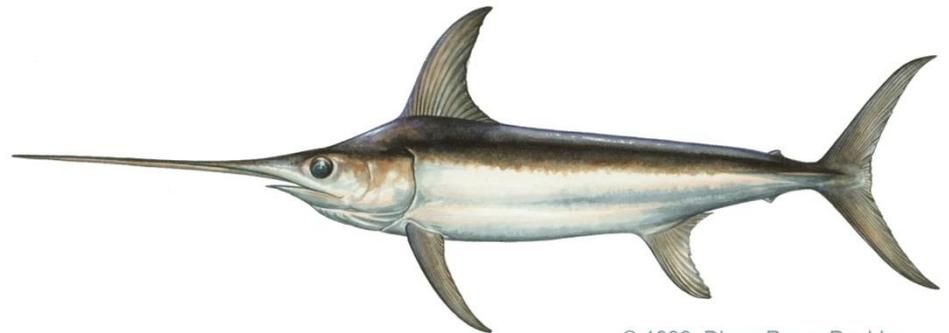
- The overall reduction in PLL fleet capacity, in combination with the totality of effort controls implemented since 1999, sufficiently limits the fishery's capacity
- Vessel upgrading and related permit transfer restrictions are no longer necessary or relevant for the Atlantic HMS PLL fishery at this time

PROPOSED REGULATORY CHANGE

Remove All Upgrade Restrictions for Vessels Issued Swordfish Directed and Atlantic Tunas Longline Category Permits



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ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

- No ecological impacts or additional interactions with protected species are anticipated
 - Overall swordfish & tuna landings are limited by the available quota and other effort controls (including Individual Bluefin Tuna Quotas), not the size of the vessel
 - Protected species interactions are governed by the 2004 HMS PLL Biological Opinion, Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Plan, and other requirements

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Although limited in scope, the proposed action would have short and long-term minor beneficial socio-economic impacts:

- Eases a barrier to entry in HMS PLL fishery
- Facilitates permit transfers
- Provides increased business flexibility
- Helps vessel owners address safety issues

INFORMATION ON SUBMITTING COMMENTS

Please submit comments to: <http://www.regulations.gov>

Keyword - “NOAA-NMFS-2016-0087”

or

Mail: Atlantic HMS Management Division, c/o Margo Schulze-Haugen, NMFS/SF1, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Identify comments with NOAA-NMFS-2016-0087

Comment Period Closes: September 26, 2016

For more information: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>

or by calling 727-824-5399

QUESTIONS or COMMENTS?

Thank You!

