



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

## **National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Announces its Intent to Delay Implementation of New Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) Requirements for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fisheries**

NMFS published a final rule on December 2, 2011 (76 FR 75492), that requires Atlantic HMS vessel owners that are subject to VMS requirements to replace existing Mobile Transmitting Unit (MTU) VMS units with an Enhanced Mobile Transmitting Unit (E-MTU) VMS unit and to provide hail in/hail out declarations. A type-approval notice was also published on that same day (76 FR 75523) updating the VMS units that would meet the new requirements.

Because of unforeseen circumstances, NMFS is preparing a final rule to suspend implementation of the VMS requirements that are scheduled to go into effect on March 1, 2012. This delay is necessary because the issues are not expected to be resolved prior to the effective date of March 1, 2012.

Specifically, NMFS is delaying the requirement to install an E-MTU by March 1, 2012, and the requirement to provide hail in/hail out declarations specifying target species, gear possessed onboard, and location and timing of landing. Thus, until further notice:

- Both Mobile Transmitting Unit (MTU) and Enhanced Mobile Transmitting Unit (E-MTU) VMS units can be used in Atlantic HMS fisheries. Approved units include:
  - Trimble Galaxy 7001 and 7005\*;
  - Thrane and Thrane Sailor VMS Silver\* and Gold;
  - SkyMate Stellar ST2500 G (with and without\* closed Dell laptop);
  - CLS American Thorium VMS TST – 100; and
  - Faria Watchdog 750 VMS (with messaging terminal).
- (\*) These MTU VMS are approved only for the remainder of their service life and all new installations must comply with all VMS unit requirements per the January 31, 2008 (73 FR 5813), type approval notice.
- Hail in/hail out declarations specifying target species, gear possessed onboard, and location and timing of landing do not need to be sent to NMFS Office of Law Enforcement.

Atlantic HMS vessel owners and operators should continue to follow all other VMS requirements including:

- Vessels should continue to provide hourly position reports using VMS units starting two hours prior to leaving port and at all times away from port.
- E-MTU VMS units should continue to be installed by a qualified marine electrician.

Additionally, reimbursement funds for E-MTU VMS are still available by contacting NMFS VMS Helpdesk at 1-888-219-9228.



For information about the NMFS VMS program or questions regarding these reporting requirements, please contact Michael Clark (Atlantic HMS Management Division, 301-427-8503) or the NMFS Southeast Office of Law Enforcement (727-824-5358; 800-758-4833; 888-219-9228).

This notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of Federal Register.

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-- An electronic newsletter informing you of the latest HMS-related actions --

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/newslist/>



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*for* Carrie D. Selberg  
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Date