

Dear Atlantic Tunas Longline Permit Holder:

November 23, 2016

**This letter provides Atlantic Tunas Longline permit holders with important information regarding the Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) program, and the transition from 2016 to 2017.**

(1) What Happens to 2016 Quota Debt and IBQ Allocation at the end of 2016?

**2016 Quota Debt:** Any outstanding quota debt from 2016 *will carry over to 2017*. In 2017, a vessel will not be allowed to fish if there is outstanding quota debt associated with the permit.

If, by the end of 2016, a permit holder does not have adequate quota available (obtained through direct allocation or leasing) to settle their vessel's quota debt, the vessel's 2017 allocation will *automatically* be reduced in the amount equal to the 2016 quota debt until the quota debt is fully settled or the 2017 allocation has been fully used.

**2016 IBQ Allocation:** Any IBQ allocation remaining in an account at the end of 2016 *will not carry over to 2017*.

(2) How do I resolve my quota debt prior to the end of 2016?

If a vessel account has quota debt (and insufficient IBQ allocation in their shareholder and/or vessel account to cover it), the permit holder must (a) transfer (lease) a sufficient amount of allocation into their vessel account (from a permitted longline vessel or a purse seine fishery participant) and (b) resolve the quota debt transaction(s) in the IBQ system online.

Specifically, Atlantic (ATL) pelagic longline quota debt can be resolved using ATL allocation, Gulf of Mexico (GOM) pelagic longline allocation, or purse seine (PSG) allocation. GOM quota debt can only be resolved using GOM allocation. An IBQ shareholder can log into their shareholder account to resolve quota debt in their vessel account(s). From the main menu, go to *Catches* then *Resolve Quota Debt Mid-Year*. Please consult page 30 of the "User Guide for the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) Online System", available online (see "Contact Info" at end of this letter).

(3) For a fishing trip that begins in 2016 and ends in 2017, to what year is the catch attributed?

If a pelagic longline fishing trip begins in 2016 and ends in 2017 and lands bluefin tuna or discards dead bluefin in 2017, the catch will **count against the vessel's 2017 quota**.

(4) How much IBQ allocation will I have in 2017?

**For 2017, the high (1.1968%), medium (0.5984%), and low share percentages (0.3690%) will be equivalent to 3,913 lb., 1,956 lb., and 1,206 lb. of annual allocation, respectively.**

The annual quota allocation for 2017 will be dispersed to IBQ shareholders on January 1, 2017, if their Atlantic Tunas Longline category permit is associated with a vessel. Remember to renew your permit if it is going to expire soon. To determine the amount of IBQ available to you, log into your shareholder account online (select the BFT Shareholder role from the dropdown). NMFS may subsequently transfer additional bluefin quota from the Reserve category to the Longline category, which could increase a shareholder's overall allocation.

**A vessel with a valid Atlantic Tunas Longline permit, but is not an IBQ shareholder, may lease IBQ allocation from another vessel.**

(5) End of Year – No IBQ Transaction Period:

**No IBQ transactions may occur from 6 p.m. on December 31 to 2 p.m. on January 1** (Eastern Time). This includes leases or transfers among vessel and shareholder accounts. NMFS uses this time period for system maintenance, end-of-year accounting, and quota disbursement (i.e., annual “maintenance window”).

**Bluefin landed during the “maintenance window”:** During the annual maintenance window, IBQ participants may still land bluefin and account for bluefin caught at the conclusion of that trip (with the dealer in the IBQ system), but the catch will count against the 2017 IBQ allocation, as mentioned above.

(6) Other Information

The **Electronic Monitoring (EM)** requirements (video cameras, etc.) remain unchanged from 2016. NOTE:

- You are required to maintain the working condition of your EM cameras. Please check/verify whether the lens of the camera has accumulated salt etc. that would compromise the quality of the video footage, and if that is the case **clean the lens by wiping it with a clean, wet, soft cloth**. If the image on the monitor appears blurry, and is not corrected by cleaning the lens, please call Saltwater, Inc., as the problem may be caused by a damaged camera housing or a flooded lens.
- You are required to **mail the hard drives at the end of each trip** (monthly mailing of hard drives does **not** comply with the requirements). Please contact the HMS Management Division with questions about the requirements.

**Pelagic Observer Program (POP):** The Pelagic Observer Program is increasing the level of observer coverage (from December 1, 2016 through April 30, 2017) in portions of the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Bights, including the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area.

**In the Online IBQ System:** Please sign in, click on the tab called “my account,” and then click on the “update account” option, to add your email address and complete the two secret questions. Providing your email address will expedite NMFS’ communication with you, and the secret questions will enhance the security of your IBQ accounts.

**Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Reporting Requirements:** You are reminded that vessels must submit through VMS a “Highly Migratory Species Bluefin Tuna Catch Report,” for each set. Specifically, such vessels must report the number of all bluefin discarded dead or retained (by standardized size ranges) within 12 hours of completion of each set (including reporting of zero bluefin on a set).

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Individual Bluefin Quota Program

- NMFS’ Southeast Regional Office Catch Share Programs webpage (<https://portal.southeast.fisheries.noaa.gov/cs/main.html>); select “additional information”
- IBQ Customer Service: 301-427-8591 (8:00am to 5:00pm, Mon - Fri, excluding federal holidays)
- “User Guide for the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) Online System” : ([http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/documents/fmp/am7/ibq\\_troubleshooting\\_guide.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/documents/fmp/am7/ibq_troubleshooting_guide.pdf))

### Electronic Monitoring

- Technical Questions about Camera System: Saltwater, Inc.: 800-770-3241
- Hard Drive Mailing Procedures: Earth Resources Technology, Inc. (ERT): 240-393-4213

### Pelagic Observer Program (POP)

- Fact Sheet (recently mailed)
- 800-858-0624

### General Information about Pelagic Longline Regulations

- Online: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/documents/fmp/am7/index.html>
- HMS Management Division: 978-281-9260 (Brad McHale or Thomas Warren) or 301-427-8503 (Craig Cockrell or Carrie Soltanoff) or 727-824-5399 (Jennifer Cudney)

Sincerely,

Margo Schulze-Haugen, Division Chief  
Highly Migratory Species Management Division  
Office of Sustainable Fisheries