[Vessel Primary Owner]
F/V [vessel name]; ATL permit [permit number]; Vessel ID [vessel ID]
[Street]
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear Atlantic Tunas Longline Permit Holder:

On December 2, 2014, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a final rule in the Federal Register (enclosed) that includes new regulations to address various issues in the management of Atlantic bluefin tuna. This letter addresses the management measures finalized under Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) (Amendment 7), and provides Atlantic Tunas Longline (ATL) permit holders with specific information related to their permit and vessel:

(1) Your initial Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) share (percentage) and allocation (mt and lb);
(2) Your status regarding vessel access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area;
(3) Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements;
(4) Electronic Monitoring requirements; and
(5) A brief review of other finalized pelagic longline management measures (a more detailed description of the measures is found in the Amendment 7 Compliance Guide).

NMFS records indicate that the F/V [vessel name], Vessel ID [vessel ID] reported at least one set to the Agency via the HMS logbook during 2006 through 2012 and is therefore defined as "active" during the qualifying time period. Permit holders that had a valid Atlantic Tunas Longline permit associated with an "active" vessel on the date of publication of the proposed rule (August 21, 2013) are considered eligible to receive an initial IBQ share. NMFS records indicated that permit # [permit number] was associated with an "active" vessel at that time, and is therefore eligible to receive IBQ share.

The IBQ share for the permit # [permit number], F/V [vessel name], Vessel ID [vessel ID], is [IBQ share %] of the overall Longline quota. For the 2015 fishing year, this initial share will be equivalent to [IBQ allocation] mt ([IBQ allocation] lb) of allocation. These numbers are subject to change in future years due to appeals, transfers, inseason adjustments, adjustments for dead discards, and changes to ICCAT recommendations).

Based on the vessel's history and minimum IBQ requirements for each region, [% GOM IBQ] ([GOM allocation] mt) can be applied towards landings or discards in the Gulf of Mexico, and [% ATL IBQ] ([ATL allocation] mt) can be applied towards landings or discards in the Atlantic. Gulf of Mexico regional allocation can also be applied towards Atlantic landings or discards; however, Atlantic regional allocation cannot be applied towards Gulf of Mexico landings or discards.

The F/V [vessel name], associated with permit # [permit number], Vessel ID [vessel ID], is [QUALIFIED/NOT QUALIFIED] for access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area, in 2015.

(1) *Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) Program*

The IBQ program is a limited access privilege program that limits the total incidental catch (landings and dead discards) of bluefin in the Longline category. The IBQ program will be managed through NMFS' South East Regional Office Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program webpage (https://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifqgt/main.html). You will be provided log-in instructions and IBQ system requirements in a future mailing (general information will also be distributed via e-mail to HMS Newslist subscribers).

Permit holders that have an eligible Atlantic Tunas Longline permit will be issued an IBQ share percentage of the overall Longline quota ("quota share"), and may be eligible to receive annual allocations associated with that permit. Eligible permit holders will only be able to access allocation when the Atlantic Tunas Longline permit is associated with a vessel. Your IBQ shares have been designated as either "Gulf of Mexico" or "Atlantic" to reflect the location of the qualified vessel's landings during 2006 through 2012. In other words, if the qualified vessel fished 50 percent of the time in the Gulf of Mexico, then 50 percent of your overall IBQ share is designated as a "Gulf of Mexico regional share." Atlantic quota may not be used in the Gulf of Mexico, but Gulf of Mexico quota may be used in either the Gulf of Mexico or Atlantic.

As of January 1, 2015, all bluefin tuna catch (dead discards and landings) will be accounted for through the electronic IBQ system and deducted from the vessel's IBQ allocation. If the amount of bluefin tuna catch for a particular trip exceeds the amount of IBQ allocation available to the vessel, the permitted vessel is considered to have a "**quota debt**" equal to the difference between the catch and the allocation. For example, if a vessel has an allocation of 0.40 mt (882 lb), and catches 0.50 mt (1,102 lb) of bluefin tuna on a trip, that vessel would have a quota debt of 0.10 mt (220 lb). If a vessel has quota debt, it may continue to fish and complete the trip, and will be responsible for resolving all quota debt. *During 2015, vessels may depart on subsequent fishing trips with pelagic longline gear even when it has quota debt.* However, quota debt will accrue throughout the 2015 fishing year, and a vessel will be responsible for accounting for all bluefin catch at the end of the year. If, by the end of 2015, a permit holder does not have adequate IBQ allocation to settle their vessel's quota debt, the vessel's allocation will be reduced in the amount equal to the quota debt in the subsequent year or years until the quota debt is fully accounted for. *Starting in 2016, all pelagic longline vessels will not be allowed to fish with this gear if the vessel has outstanding quota debt, as quota debts will need to be accounted for on a trip level basis.*

Therefore, if a vessel accrues quota debt on a trip, NMFS strongly recommends that the vessel resolve any quota debt by acquiring additional IBQ allocation through leasing prior to departing on a subsequent fishing trip with pelagic longline gear, or as soon as possible.

Starting in 2016, in order to depart on a pelagic longline trip, permit holders must have a minimum amount of quota allocation, 0.25 mt in the Gulf of Mexico or 0.125 mt in the Atlantic. Details regarding the calculation of IBQ shares and allocation are provided in the addendum to this letter ("Your IBQ Tier, Share, and Allocation"). **For more detailed information on the IBQ program please see *Frequently Asked Questions for the Atlantic HMS Bluefin Tuna IBQ Program*, enclosed. For questions, please contact IBQ Customer Service at 301-427-8591 or NMFS.HMS.IBQ@noaa.gov.**

(2) *Access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Areas*

The Cape Hatteras Pelagic Longline Gear Restricted Area, as defined and shown in Figure 1, is located off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. During the five-month period from December through April, only vessels designated as "Qualified" by NMFS that have minimum Atlantic allocation may fish in this area. The Gear Restricted Area will be effective January 1, 2015. Qualified vessels are those that have demonstrated an ability to both avoid bluefin and comply with reporting and monitoring requirements, and therefore have been granted conditional access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area. Details regarding the calculation of scores which determine if the vessel is qualified for access to the Gear Restricted Area are provided in the addendum to this letter ("Access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area"). **In order to access the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area, a "Qualified" vessel must have this letter on board.**

The Spring Gulf of Mexico Gear Restricted Areas (Figure 2) do NOT allow access based on performance metrics. All vessels are restricted from using pelagic longline gear in these areas during April and May of a given year.

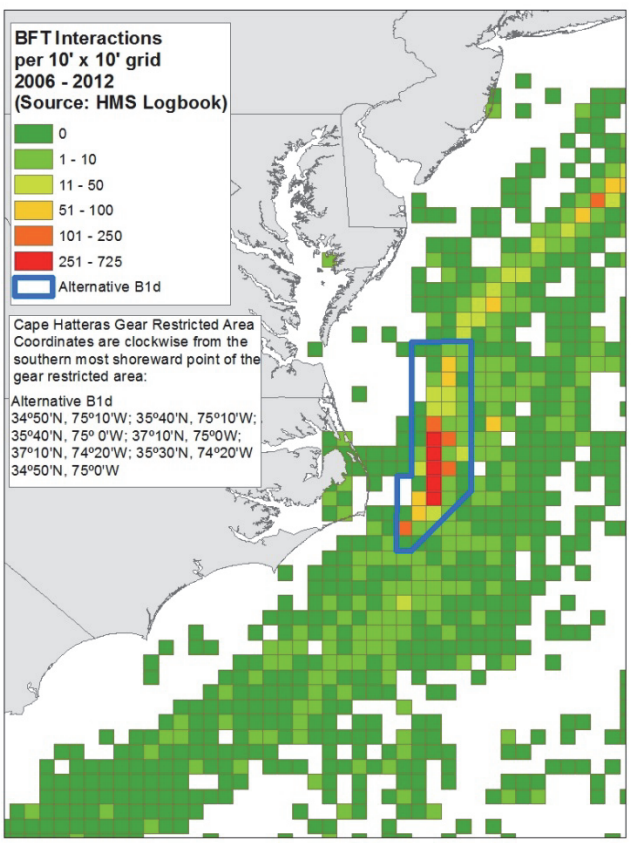

Figure 1. Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area

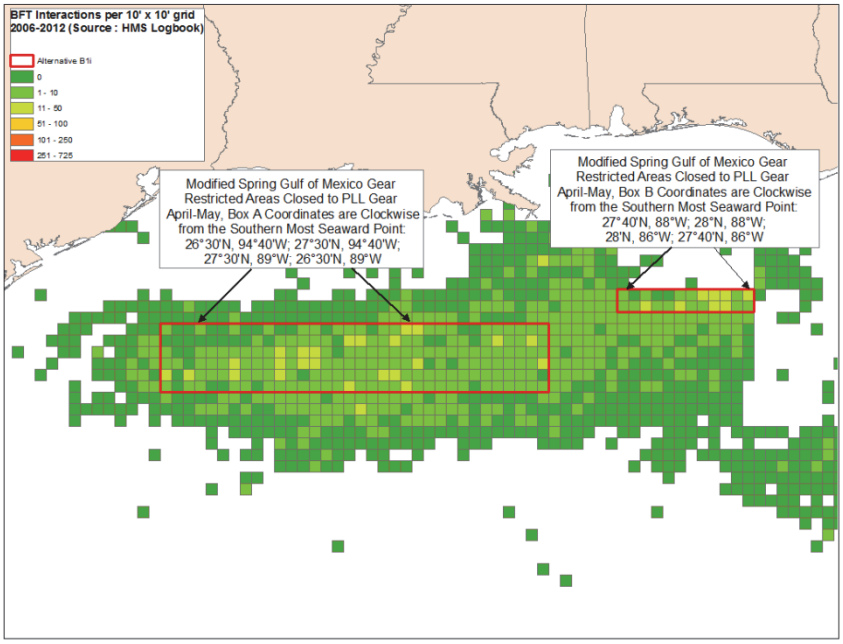

Figure 2. Spring Gulf of Mexico Gear Restricted Areas

(3) Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Requirements

- Catch Reports
  - Vessels fishing with pelagic longline gear must report through VMS within 12 hours of completion of each pelagic longline set the following: date the set was made; area in which the set was made; the number of hooks in the set; and the approximate length of all bluefin tuna retained, discarded dead, or released alive (by standardized size ranges).
  - If a vessel is fishing both inside and outside of the Northeast Distant Area (NED) on the same trip (straddle trip), that vessel must submit two VMS bluefin catch reports noting the location of the catch.
- Landing Notifications
  - Permit holders must submit a landing notification at least 3 hours, but no more than 12 hours, prior to any landing. Information required for a landing notification includes (but may not be limited to):
    - Vessel identification
    - Time of arrival
    - City of landing port
    - State of landing port
  - For trips that will be less than 3 hours in length, landing notifications can be made at the same time (or before) a hail out declaration is submitted.
  - **Please Note:** The confirmation code does not automatically give the fisherman permission to land and offload. It simply provides NMFS a confirmation that a landing notification was made. The owner/operator is responsible for ensuring all regulations are satisfied.

- Because several VMS vendors are type approved, there may be some inherent variability in VMS data forms between different VMS units. Permit holders are responsible for ensuring that all required information is included with each VMS report submitted.
- Additional VMS requirements for pelagic longline vessels can be found in the HMS Commercial Fishing Compliance Guide (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/guides/index.html), in the Amendment 7 Compliance Guide, and in the IBQ Program FAQ document (enclosed with this letter).
- For questions regarding VMS, please contact the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) Southeast Division at 1-800-758-4833 or 727-824-5334.

(4) Electronic Monitoring Requirements

NMFS has identified Federal funding for the initial purchase and installation of electronic monitoring equipment for eligible vessels. However, NMFS cannot guarantee the availability of funding after June 1, 2015 or for non-eligible vessels.

Installation:

- Permit owner/operators (or their representatives) that intend to fish using an Atlantic Tunas Longline permit using pelagic longline gear must coordinate with NMFS-approved contractors to install, test, and certify electronic monitoring equipment.
- Permit owner/operators will be required to make their vessel accessible to NMFS or NMFS-approved contractors on a specific date, or range of dates, in order to allow installation and testing, and certification of the electronic monitoring equipment and training in the use of electronic monitoring equipment. Permit owner/operators may be required to steam to a designated port within their geographic region to enable such installation.
- **Starting on June 1, 2015, in order to fish using pelagic longline gear, a vessel must have a valid electronic monitoring certification from NMFS, or NMFS-approved contractors, that it has a fully functioning electronic monitoring system on board. Further details and instructions will be provided in a future mailing and made available on the HMS website.**

Recording and submitting data:

- The permit owner/operator is responsible to ensure that all bluefin tuna are handled in a safe manner that enables the electronic monitoring system to record such fish, and must identify a crew person or employee responsible for ensuring that all handling, retention, and sorting of bluefin tuna occurs in accordance with the regulations.
- The NMFS-approved contractors will develop a written electronic monitoring operational plan in order to document the standardized procedures relating to electronic monitoring and facilitate communication of such procedures to the vessel crew.
- The permit owner/operator must submit the electronic monitoring hard drives to NMFS or NMFS-approved contractors within 48 hours of the completion of the trip.

Equipment:

- NMFS is not implementing regulations with detailed technical specifications for electronic monitoring equipment. Instead, NMFS is implementing functional requirements that specify important functions the system as a whole must achieve (as described below).

- As explained in more detail below, vessels must, in accordance with instructions provided by NMFS or NMFS-approved contractors, install and maintain the following equipment, as components of an electronic monitoring system:
    - Two to four video cameras
    - a recording device
    - video monitor
    - hydraulic pressure transducer
    - winch drum rotation sensor
    - system control box
    - GPS receiver, and
    - related support equipment needed to achieve the objectives (e.g., power supply, camera mounts, and lighting).
- Vessel owner/operators must facilitate installation of, maintain, and operate the required equipment in accordance with instructions provide by NMFS, or NMFS-approved contractors, and allow inspection of the equipment by NMFS, the USCG, or NMFS' designee.
- The electronic monitoring system must include software to enable a test function so that the vessel operator may test the status of the system (*i.e.*, whether it is fully functional) prior to each trip, and record the outcome of the test. A vessel operator may not depart on a pelagic longline trip unless the pre-trip test indicates that the system is fully functioning (unless authorized by NMFS).

Further instructions for installation and use of electronic monitoring systems will be provided in a future mailing and made available on the HMS website. For technical questions regarding your electronic monitoring system, please call the NMFS-approved contractor at 1-800-770-3241.

(5) *Other New Management Measures and Effective Dates*

Atlantic Tuna Longline permit holders should be aware of the following new regulations. Regulations are effective January 1, 2015, unless otherwise noted. Electronic monitoring measures are effective June 1, 2015.

- **NMFS has eliminated target catch requirements for the pelagic longline fishery.**
- **Mandatory retention of dead legal sized bluefin is required.**
- Codified reallocation will increase the Longline category quota annually by 62.5 mt in addition to the Longline category quota of 8.1%. Based on the current U.S. quota, this will result in a pelagic longline quota of 137.3 mt for 2015 (subject to change due to inseason adjustments and ICCAT recommendations).
- Pelagic longline vessels are allowed to transit closed and gear restricted areas after removing and stowing gear.
- NMFS has the authority to close the pelagic longline fishery.
- NMFS may augment the amount of quota in the Reserve category; there are new criteria in the list of determination criteria NMFS considers in redistributing quota to or from the Reserve category.

- Implementation of the U.S. annual quota of northern albacore tuna recommended by ICCAT and provisions for the accounting of overharvest and underharvest of the quota via annual specifications.

For more information, please see the final rule for Amendment 7 and the Amendment 7 Compliance Guide (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/documents/fmp/am7/index.html).

(6) *Appeals*

Permit holders that wish to appeal the amount of IBQ share and/or performance scores may submit a written request to appeal, indicating the reason for the appeal and providing supporting documentation (e.g., copies of landings records and/or permit ownership, etc.). Please see the document entitled "Appeals Process – IBQ Program and Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area Access," which is enclosed with this letter, for further information regarding appeals.

For more information about all aspects of Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP, please visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/documents/fmp/am7/index.html or contact the HMS Management Division at 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

Your IBQ Tier, Initial Share, and Allocation

Calculation of Tiers:

An Atlantic Tunas Longline permit holder's initial IBQ share is based on:

A. the number of bluefin tuna interactions (landings, dead discards, and live discards) for the years 2006 through 2012 (Column **A** in Table 1), and
B. the amount of designated species landings (i.e., swordfish, yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna, albacore tuna, dolphin, wahoo, shortfin mako sharks, porbeagle shark, and thresher shark) attributed to the qualified vessel based on logbook data for 2006 through 2012 (Column **B** in Table 1).

The number of bluefin interactions is then divided by the designated species landings to produce a ratio (Column **C** in Table 1).

Table 1. The vessel-specific data used to calculate your bluefin interactions: designated species landings ratio.

Number of Bluefin Interactions (**A**)	Designated Species Landings (lb) (**B**)	Bluefin Interactions: Designated Species Landings Ratio (**C** = A/B x 10,000)*
[number]	[number]	[number]

* multiplied by 10,000 to derive a ratio that is more practical (i.e., 0.95 instead of 0.000095).

Thresholds based on percentiles (High 66-100%, Medium: 33<66%, Low: <33%) were used to group the 135 eligible vessels by the sum of Designated Species Landings and by the Bluefin Interactions: Designated Species Landings Ratio (Table 2). Vessels were assigned scores based on the bins into which they were categorized.

Table 2. Scoring of the two factors that determine tiers for IBQ share and allocation distribution.

Bins (Based on Percentiles)	Designated Species Landings (average lb/year) (**B**)	Bluefin Interactions: Designated Species Landings Ratio (**C**)
High Bin (66 - 100%)	≥ 61,269 (Score 3)	< 0.2884 (Score 3)
Medium Bin (33 - < 66%)	61,268 – 21,180 (Score 2)	0.2884 – 0.9427 (Score 2)
Low Bin (0 - < 33%)	< 21,180 (Score 1)	> 0.9427 (Score 1)

- Compare your numbers from **Table 1** to the bins identified in **Table 2** to determine the scores for your Designated Species Landings (**B**) and your Bluefin Interactions: Designated Species Landings Ratio (**C**).
- Then add the scores together to generate your combined score (ranges from 2 to 6).
- Combined scores were separated into three **Tiers: High (5-6), Medium (4), and Low (2-3)**. Your 2015 IBQ share and allocation depend on your tier.

Information for *YOUR* account:

Your permit **[permit #]** (on vessel **[vessel ID]**) was classified in the **[HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW]** tier.

The overall initial pelagic longline IBQ quota for 2015 is equivalent to approximately 137mt or 302,033 lb. Table 3 shows the IBQ shares for permits in each tier and estimated allocation in metric tons and pounds. Permit allocations for each tier were calculated by multiplying the share (%) for each tier by 137 mt. IBQ shares and allocations are estimated for the start of the 2015 fishing year and are subject to change due to appeals, transfers, and adjustments for dead discards and ICCAT recommendations.

Table 3. Total IBQ quota shares (%) and estimated allocation (mt and lb) for eligible permits by tier category.

(1)

Tier	# of Permits	IBQ Shares for each Tier	IBQ Allocation for each Tier**
High	43	1.2040%*	1.6495 mt (3,637 lb)
Medium	61	0.6020%	0.8247 mt (1,818 lb)
Low	31	0.3712%	0.5085 mt (1,121 lb)

* In Final Amendment 7, values for shares and allocations are shown with 2 decimal places. For example, IBQ shares are shown as 1.20%, 0.60%, and 0.37%. Those values are rounded from the 4-decimal-place values shown here, which are used in the web-based IBQ system. ** Conversion from mt to pounds whole weight: lb = 2204.62262 × mt. Bluefin are managed at the national and international level in metric tons. However, the IFQ system currently manages allocations to the nearest pound. Some rounding error is inherent when converting from metric tons to pounds.

The IBQ system has two regional pelagic longline share designations: Gulf of Mexico (GOM) and Atlantic (ATL). Your IBQ share (below) was split between the two regions based on historical landings.

Information for *YOUR* account:

Your permit **[permit #]** (on vessel **[vessel ID]**) was classified in the **[HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW]** tier.
You qualified for **[IBQ share]% ([IBQ allocation] mt** or **[IBQ allocation] lb**) of the IBQ Quota.

Your GOM and ATL percentage and allocation were based on historic landings in each region*:

(2) **[%GOM IBQ]% GOM** **[%ATL IBQ]% ATL**

Your allocation per region (3) = Your regional percentage (2) × Your IBQ allocation (1)

(3) **GOM:** [%GOM IBQ]% x [IBQ allocation] mt = **[GOM allocation] mt ([GOM allocation] lb)**

ATL: [%ATL IBQ]% x [IBQ allocation] mt = **[ATL allocation] mt ([ATL allocation] lb)**

* If a permit would be allocated less than a minimum share amount for a particular region (i.e., less than 0.125 mt for the Atlantic or less than 0.25 mt for the Gulf of Mexico), the allocation was instead designated as the other of the two regions, and the permit was allocated 100% in that region.

Access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area

This document contains information on whether the vessel listed below with an Atlantic Tunas Longline permit has access to fish in the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area, during January through April, 2015.

Atlantic Tunas Longline permit holders with vessels eligible for initial IBQ shares that have demonstrated an ability to avoid bluefin and comply with reporting and monitoring requirements have been granted conditional access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area based on: (1) Ratio of bluefin interactions to designated species landings; (2) Compliance with the Pelagic Observer Program requirements; and (3) Compliance with HMS logbook reporting requirements. The initial assessment of performance metrics (i.e., the 2015 fishing year) is based on data from 2006 through 2012. Subsequent assessments (i.e., the 2016 fishing year) will be based on the most recent complete three-consecutive-year-period data that are available.

The F/V [vessel name], permit # [permit number], Vessel ID [vessel ID], is **[QUALIFIED/NOT QUALIFIED]** for access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area.

The specific historical data associated with your vessel that this determination is based upon, and the scoring methods, are described below.

(1) Bluefin Avoidance Score: Compare your Bluefin Interactions: Designated Species Landings Ratio (see separate document entitled "Your IBQ Tier, Share, and Allocation" Table 1, Item C) to the scale in Table 1 to determine your Bluefin Avoidance Score.

Table 1. Bluefin avoidance scores are based on a vessel's Bluefin Interactions: Designated Species Landings Ratio. Ratios and Scores are based on data reported in the HMS Logbooks (2006 – 2012).

Ratio	0	>0 to <1	≥1 to <2	≥2 to <3	≥3
Bluefin Avoidance Score	5	4	3	2	1

Your Bluefin Interactions: Designated Species Landings Ratio for your vessel (**[vessel ID]**) is **[ratio]**.

Your Bluefin Avoidance Score is **[score]**.

(2) Pelagic Observer Program (POP) Compliance Score: Your POP Compliance Score is based on data provided by the Pelagic Observer Program shown in Table 2. Use the "Percent Compliant" and the "Percent Observed" percentage from Table 2 to generate an "Initial POP Compliance Score" in Table 3 (refer to Figure 2.7 in Final Amendment 7 for further detail on scores). For example, if in Table 2 the "Percent Observed" is 50%, and the "Percent Compliant" is 90%, then in Table 3, the "Initial POP Compliance Score" would be 3.

Table 2. Your vessel-specific data regarding compliance and participation with the Pelagic Observer Program from 2006 through 2012.

Times Selected (A)	Times Observed (B)	Compliant But Not Observed (C)	Non-Compliant (D)	Non-Compliant With Fishing (E)	Percent Compliant (B+C) / A	Percent Observed (B/A)
[number]	[number]	[number]	[number]	[number]	[%]	[%]

Table 3. POP Compliance Scores are generated by comparing your POP data against the scoring system in the first two rows of this table.

Percent Compliant	100%	80-100%	80-100%	<80%	na
Percent Observed	90-100%	>60-90%	>33-60%	0-33%	na
Initial POP Compliance Score*	5	4	3	2	1

**If there is evidence of non-compliant fishing, your score will be decreased by 1 point.*

Evidence of Non-Compliant Fishing: [YES/NO].

Your Vessel's Final POP Compliance Score is **[score].**

(3) Logbook Compliance Score: NMFS generated Logbook Compliance Scores for your vessel by comparing the average number of days it took for logbook reports to be submitted to the Logbook Program (2006-2012) to the data ranges in Table 4.

Table 4. Compare the average number of days between offloading and receipt of your logbooks to the scoring system in this table to generate your Logbook Reporting Score.

Data Type	Days Between Offload and Mail Opening (Receipt)				
Data Range	≤ 7	>7 to ≤30	> 30 to ≤60	>60 to ≤90	> 90
Logbook Compliance Score	5	4	3	2	1

The average number of days to report your vessel's logbooks was [average].

Your vessel's Logbook Compliance Score is **[score]**.

Rules for Access: Using your **Bluefin Avoidance Score**, **POP Compliance Score**, and **Logbook Compliance Score** and the rules in Table 5, your can determine whether you have access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted area and selected closed areas.

Your Scores:

Bluefin Avoidance Score	**[score]**
POP Compliance Score	**[score]**
Logbook Compliance Score	**[score]**

Table 5. Vessel owners should compare their bluefin avoidance scores, POP Compliance Scores, and Logbook Compliance Scores to the rules below to determine whether they have access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted area and selected closed areas.

Score	Access
If **Bluefin Avoidance Score** = 1	No
If **Bluefin Avoidance Score** is >1 and **POP Compliance Score** is = 1 or 2	If **Logbook Compliance Score** ≤ 3, No If **Logbook Compliance Score** ≥ 4, Yes
If **Bluefin Avoidance Score** > 1 and **POP Compliance Score** > 2	Yes

Appendix 11.7 in Final Amendment 7 provides further information on the application of performance metrics to determine vessel access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area.