



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

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS)
REMINDS TOURNAMENT OPERATORS TO REGISTER HIGHLY
MIGRATORY SPECIES TOURNAMENTS FOR 2007**

Tournament registration plays an important role in facilitating the collection of recreational catch and effort data for Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS). Data obtained from HMS tournaments is used to analyze the impacts of potential fishery management actions, assess the status of Atlantic HMS, and to assist the United States in complying with international fishery management obligations. As of December 12, 2006, NMFS had registered 257 HMS tournaments for the year. As always, your cooperation in complying with this requirement is greatly appreciated. **If you have not already done so, please register your 2007 tournaments with NMFS' Highly Migratory Species Management Division in St. Petersburg, FL.**

Federal regulations require that all tournaments awarding points or prizes for Atlantic HMS, including tunas, sharks, swordfish, and/or billfish, register with NMFS at least **four weeks prior to commencement of a tournament**. Completed registration forms should either be faxed or mailed to the HMS Management Division in St. Petersburg, FL. The return fax number and address are printed on the enclosed registration form. The registration form may also be obtained via the Internet from either of the following websites: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms or www.hmspermits.gov or by calling the HMS Management Division's St. Petersburg office at (727) 824-5399. When completing the registration form, please remember to write legibly and to specify the name of the person who is designated as the tournament operator.

Upon receipt of a completed registration form, the HMS Management Division will provide the operator with a tournament identification number, which should be retained for the remainder of the fishing year. If selected for reporting tournament results, operators will be contacted by NMFS' Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

As a reminder, beginning January 1, 2007, anglers fishing from HMS-permitted vessels and participating in a tournament which bestows points, prizes, or awards for Atlantic billfish (blue & white marlin, sailfish or spearfish) must deploy only non-offset circle hooks when using natural bait or natural bait/artificial lure combinations. Anglers in these tournaments may use J-hooks only on artificial lures. This measure is expected to substantially improve the survivability of released billfish.

Finally, NMFS also urges tournament operators to remind tournament participants of HMS permit requirements. For more information on HMS Angling or Charter/Headboat category permits, please log on to www.hmspermits.gov or call the HMS Management Division's St. Petersburg office at (727) 824-5399.

Thank you, in advance, for registering your 2007 HMS tournament(s). Good luck and happy fishing!



Alan Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

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Date

