



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

NMFS Announces a Final Rule to Modify Swordfish Management Measures

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has published a final rule (72 FR 31688, June 7, 2007) to modify current regulations affecting the U.S. swordfish fishery. These measures will provide additional opportunities for U.S. vessels to more fully harvest the domestic swordfish quota, in recognition of the improved stock status of North Atlantic swordfish, while ensuring that the bycatch of non-target and protected species remain within acceptable levels.

Effective July 9, 2007, swordfish retention limits for vessels issued Incidental swordfish permits are increased to 30 fish per vessel per trip, except that vessels participating in the squid trawl fishery are limited to 15 swordfish. For HMS Angling category permit holders, the swordfish retention limit will remain at one per person, but the vessel limit is increased to four fish. Finally, for HMS Charter/headboat permit holders, the swordfish retention limit will change to one per paying passenger, up to maximum of six per charter vessel, and 15 per headboat vessel.

Effective August 6, 2007, HMS limited access vessel upgrading restrictions are modified, but only for vessels that concurrently possess, or are eligible to renew, on August 6, 2007, Incidental or Directed swordfish and shark permits, as well as an Atlantic Tunas Longline category permit. These vessels may be upgraded, or permits transferred, so long as the upgrade or permit transfer does not result in an increase in vessel size (LOA, GRT, and NT) of more than 35 percent, relative to the vessel first issued the HMS limited access permit (baseline vessel). Also, all horsepower upgrading restrictions for these vessels are removed. In addition, effective July 9, 2007, restrictions specifying that a vessel may be upgraded only once will be removed for all HMS limited access permits. NMFS will provide additional information to limited access permit holders regarding eligibility for the modified vessel upgrading restrictions in a future notice.

This notice is a courtesy to HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishing actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information on this final rule and its requirements, contact Sari Kiraly at (301) 713-2347 or Rick Pearson at (727) 824-5399. Copies of the final rule and the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis are available upon request from the Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone: 301-713-2347, fax: 301-713-1917). The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>.

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Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

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