



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

NMFS Requests Comments on the Issuance of Exempted Fishing Permits, Scientific Research Permits, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits for the Collection of Atlantic HMS and an Extension of the Pelagic Longline Research Conducted in Closed Areas

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces its intent to issue Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Scientific Research Permits (SRPs), Display Permits, Letters of Acknowledgement (LOAs), and Chartering Permits for the collection of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) in 2010. In general, EFPs and related permits would authorize collection of a limited number of tunas, swordfish, billfishes, and sharks from Federal waters in the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico for the purposes of scientific data collection and public display. Chartering permits allow the collection of HMS on the high seas or in the Exclusive Economic Zone of other nations.

The HMS Management Division issued 32 EFPs, SRPs, Display Permits, and LOAs in 2008 and has issued 30 such permits in 2009 to date. These permits were issued to vessels and authorized samplers participating in at-sea observer programs, NMFS and non-NMFS scientists collecting data on HMS, educational institutions, public aquaria, and collectors acquiring HMS for display, among others.

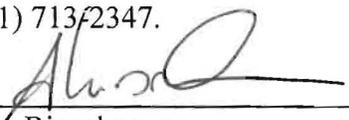
Exempted fishing permit applications would continue to be considered for issuance in 2010 for bycatch reduction research in closed areas of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea to test gear modifications and fishing techniques aimed at avoiding incidental capture of non-target species. The HMS Management Division will seek additional public comment, as necessary, on any such specific proposals where research is not being conducted solely from *bona fide* research vessels.

On January 3, 2008, NMFS announced a final decision to issue EFPs to conduct research in portions of the East Florida Coast (EFC) and Charleston Bump closed areas using a limited number of pelagic longline (PLL) vessels. The goals of the research are to collect baseline data in closed areas under current PLL fishery conditions; evaluate existing PLL bycatch reduction measures; and, collect data to examine the effectiveness of existing PLL area closures to meet current conservation and harvesting goals. The current EFP for this research expire on February 28, 2010. However, since approximately 60 percent of the sets are anticipated to be completed by February 28, 2010, NMFS may extend this EFP to allow for completion of the research. Details on completed trips and catch associated with the research will be explained in a separate [Federal Register](#) notice.

Written comments on these proposed collection, research, and fishing activities will be considered by NMFS when issuing EFPs, SRPs, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits if received on or before 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, on December 23, 2009. Please send comments to Craig Cockrell, Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1), NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The permit applications and copies of the

pertaining to EFPs, SRPs, LOAs, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits may also be requested from this address. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (301) 713-1917 or by e-mail to HMSEFP.2010@noaa.gov.

This notice is a courtesy to individuals interested in HMS fisheries activities to keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Craig Cockrell at (301) 713/2347.



Alan Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

NOV 23 2009

Date

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