



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

NMFS ANNOUNCES DECISION TO EXTEND EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT TO CONDUCT PELAGIC LONGLINE RESEARCH IN THE EAST FLORIDA COAST AND CHARLESTON BUMP CLOSED AREAS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces a final decision to issue a seven-month extension of Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to finalize scientific research and analysis in the East Florida Coast (EFC) and Charleston Bump closed areas.

After taking into consideration all public comments as well as recognizing the need for statistically robust data to examine pelagic longline (PLL) bycatch reduction in closed areas, NMFS has decided to extend the current EFP examining PLL baseline data of the closed areas until September 30, 2010. NMFS announced its final decision to issue EFPs to conduct research in portions of the EFC and Charleston Bump areas using a limited number of pelagic longline (PLL) vessels on January 3, 2008 (73 FR 450). The initial EFP for this research was issued on February 15, 2008, and authorized 289 PLL sets, of which 145 were to be conducted in open areas and 144 to be conducted in closed areas. This EFP allows the collection of PLL baseline data of the closed areas to examine current PLL bycatch reduction measures and evaluate the effectiveness of the closed areas in meeting current conservation and harvesting goals. From February 2008, through January 2010, 148 PLL research sets were completed. Of these sets, 83 sets were deployed inside the closed areas and 65 sets deployed outside the closed areas. The extension of this EFP will allow the researchers additional opportunity to complete the remaining 80 sets in the open areas and 61 sets in the closed areas that were initially authorized under the EFP. The extension of this EFP will not change any research objectives and will not allow an increase in fishing effort over that amount previously authorized.

This notice is a courtesy to Highly Migratory Species (HMS) fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. For more information regarding this EFP extension, please contact Margo Schulze-Haugen at 301-713-2347. Information will also be posted on the HMS Management Division website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>.


Alan Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

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Date

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