

Caribbean Highly Migratory Species Issues Discussion

HMS Management Division
Advisory Panel Meeting
April 16, 2008

Caribbean Fishery

- NMFS recognizes the unique characteristics of some segments of the Caribbean fisheries
 - Small vessels
 - Short trips
 - Generally limited profit margins
 - High local and personal consumption of catches
 - Artisanal component

Limited Permitting

- Limited number of fishing and dealer permits held in the Caribbean

Limited Access Vessel Permits (Nov. 30, 2007)

	Tuna LL	SWO-D	SWO-I	SWO-HG	SHK-D	SHK-I
PR	0	0	0	0	0	0
USVI	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rest of Atlantic	218	181	79	82	227	290

Open Access Permits

Open Access Permits (Nov 30, 2007)

Territory	Angling Permit	CHB Permit	General Category Permit
Puerto Rico	773	19	97
St. Croix	26	3	12
St. Thomas	6	11	2
St. John	3	7	1
Rest of U.S.	23,412	3,861	3,504

Dealer Permits

Dealer Permits (Nov. 30, 2007)

	Atlantic SWO Dealer	Atl. Shark Dealer	Bluefin Dealer	BAYS Only Dealer	BFT & BAYS Dealer
Puerto Rico	1	1	0	3	0
USVI	0	0	0	2	2
Rest of U.S.	188	192	9	17	253

Landings

2006 HMS Caribbean Landings (MT)		
Species	Caribbean	Total U.S.
Yellowfin Tuna	188.0	7075.0
Skipjack Tuna	18.2	61.0
Bigeye Tuna	11.0	987.0
N. Albacore Tuna	10.9	396.0
N. Atl. Swordfish	88.9	2048.0
Blue Marlin*	2 fish	2 fish
White Marlin*	1 fish	1 fish

*Exclusive of tournament landings

Known Problems

- Unpermitted fishing vessels and dealers result in:
 - Increased risk of regulatory violations
 - Limited data & reporting
 - Underestimates of size and value of Caribbean landings
 - Disadvantage to U.S. Caribbean if domestic regional allocations are made
 - Underestimate of U.S. landings during international negotiations
 - Limits ability to fulfill international reporting obligations
 - Increased uncertainty in stock assessments and management decisions

HMS FMP Caribbean Amendment

- To address these and other issues, NMFS intends to:
 - Develop a FMP amendment for the Caribbean
 - ID specific barriers
 - Develop ways to address unique issues
 - Examine possibility of modifying existing management measures to better fit the needs of the U.S. Caribbean while still meeting management goals

Looking Forward - the Process

- Caribbean Council Meeting (12/2007)
- Prescoping meetings (3/2008) – informal discussions with local stakeholders to identify range of issues in need of resolution
- HMS Advisory Panel Meeting (4/2008)
- Conduct formal public scoping – request input from public on issues in need of resolution
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Rule
- Public Hearings
- Final EIS and Final Rule

Partners

- Identify appropriate partners
 - Caribbean Fishery Management Council
 - Dept. of Natural Resources – Puerto Rico
 - Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources; Div. of Fish and Wildlife – USVI
 - Local fishing organizations
 - Commercial
 - Recreational
 - Others?

Issues Raised By the CFMC

- Dealer Permits
 - Concern raised over lack of dealer permits - Should fishermen also hold dealer permits?
- Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)
 - FADs are currently deployed, USVI DFW plans to deploy more
- Sales of HMS
 - Concern over sales of HMS by fishermen not holding Territorial Commercial Fishing Permit (USVI) (HMS CHB)
- Outreach
 - Spanish Translation necessary (summary documents/presentations)
 - HMS should work with NMFS Caribbean field stations, fishing magazines and radio stations to announce hearing dates locations/outreach
 - New regulatory brochures should be distributed at tournaments, boat ramps, cleaning stations, and tackle shops

Pre-Scoping: Puerto Rico

- PR fisheries data collection limited (large correction factors generally applied)
- NMFS should draft a MOU with PR acknowledging the need for HMS data collection effort
- Few permitted HMS dealers; Should commercial fishermen also hold dealer permits?
- Currently, fish sold directly from vessels or at roadside stands (not through HMS dealers)
- NMFS should translate and distribute summary of DEIS

Pre-Scoping: St. Thomas

- Interest in a combined HMS harvest and dealer permit
- DFW St. Thomas could modify commercial catch report to collect HMS catch; DFW could send summary reports to NMFS
- Handlines are dominant gear type
- Dealer permit problem: fish sold directly from harvesters to hotels/restaurants
- Vessels average 25' (37' max)
- FADS – Important to USVI tunas fishery (8 deployed, 24 planned)

Pre-Scoping: St. Croix

- Interest in a HMS harvest/dealer permit
- DFW St. Croix willing to participate in HMS data collection
- FAD Tuna fishery with very limited SWO
- Handline and buoy gear used for YFT
- “Trailer” fishery, vessels 24’ – 26’
- Dealer permit problem: fish sold directly from harvesters to hotels/restaurants

Discussion

- Partners
 - CFMC; PR; DFW St. Thomas and St. Croix; Fishing organizations; other?
- Potential Options
 - Create commercial HMS Caribbean small boat permit (combined tuna, swordfish, and shark)
 - Combine commercial vessel and dealer permits (harvest and sale permit)
 - Partner with PR and USVI to collect landings data
 - Modify authorized gear
 - Address FAD issue
- Other?