

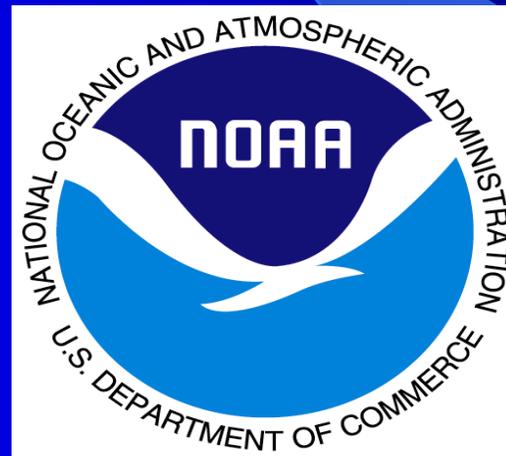
Pelagic Longline Research & Fishery Update

Highly Migratory Species Management Division

NOAA/NMFS

HMS Advisory Panel Meeting

April 15 - 17, 2008



PLL Research EFP Background

- The Florida East Coast and Charleston Bump areas have been closed to vessels fishing with pelagic longline gear since 2001
- The swordfish fishery has changed considerably since the closures went into effect ($B=0.99B_{MSY}$)
- New gear requirements went into effect in 2004 throughout the pelagic longline fishery

Objectives of Research

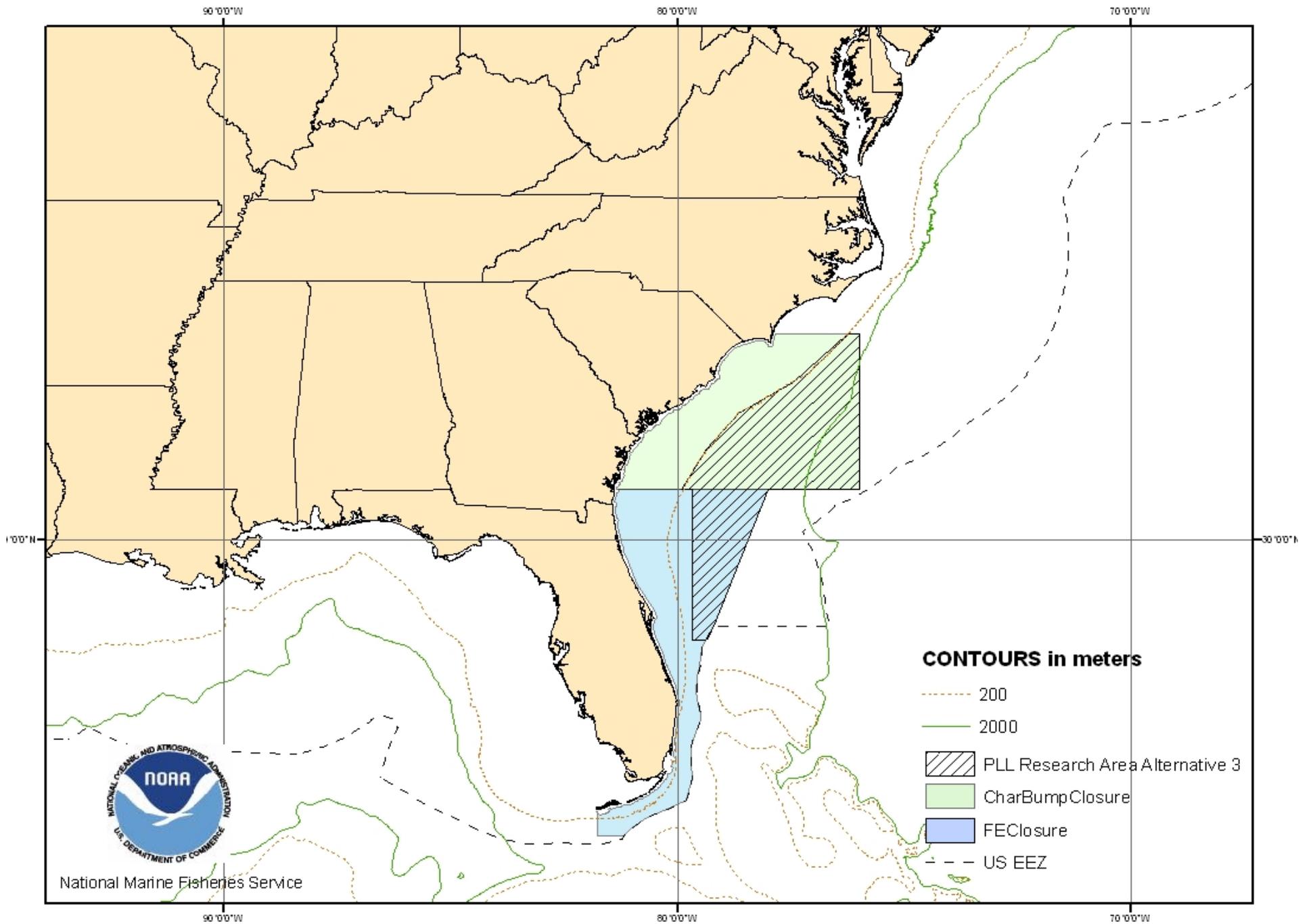
- To collect baseline PLL fishery data from portions of the EFC and Charleston Bump closed areas under current fishery conditions
- To evaluate the effectiveness of existing bycatch reduction measures
- Collect data necessary to examine the effectiveness of existing area closures to meet current conservation and harvesting goals.

PLL Research EFP

- NMFS published notice of availability of Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on Nov. 5, 2007 (72 FR 62441)
- NMFS published a Final EA on Jan 3, 2008 (73 FR 450) and issued an Exempted Fishing Permit to conduct authorized activities

Authorized Activities

- Three vessels (with only two operating at any given time and one dedicated backup vessel) are authorized to make 289 sets consisting of 500 18/0 non-offset circle hooks each (145 sets in the closed area).
- One-half of the sets to be made inside the closed area and one-half outside the closed areas.
- 100 percent observer coverage throughout the duration of the experiment



Results to Date

- 4 trips completed (2 vessels)
- 24 sets with 18/0 non-offset circle hooks
- Highest SWO CPUE in Charleston Bump
- No BFT
- 4 white marlin; 3 blue marlin; 3 sailfish (1 sailfish released dead)
- 2 turtles (1 loggerhead, 1 leatherback, both released alive with no trailing gear)

Atlantic PLTRT Update

- Draft Atlantic Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Plan (PLTRTP) was released June 8, 2006 <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/interactions/trt/pl-trt.htm>
- PLTRTP Proposed Rule is going through internal review at NMFS
- A PLTRT meeting is scheduled for this summer to coincide with the proposed rule comment period

Live Bait Prohibition

- HMS issued a reminder in early January 2008 on live bait prohibition in the Gulf of Mexico. Vessels may not:
 - Fish or deploy PLL gear with live bait
 - Possess live bait on board
 - Maintain live baitfish in a tank or well
 - Set up or attach an aeration or water circulation device to any tank or well

Upcoming/Ongoing Activities

- Based on observer program data, HMS is examining catches of sea turtles on different hook and bait combos
- NMFS is continuing to examine swordfish marketing options
- NMFS is monitoring swordfish landings and preparing for the ICCAT meeting