

Science, Service, Stewardship



Swordfish Fishery

HMS Advisory Panel Meeting

May 12, 2010

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FISHERIES
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Outline

- SWO Fishery Revitalization – recent history, accomplishments, and challenges
- ANPR - General Commercial Handgear Permit
- Buoy Gear / User Group Conflict
- Looking Forward



Regulatory Background

1985: First SWO FMP Developed (joint Council effort)

1999: HMS FMP Developed

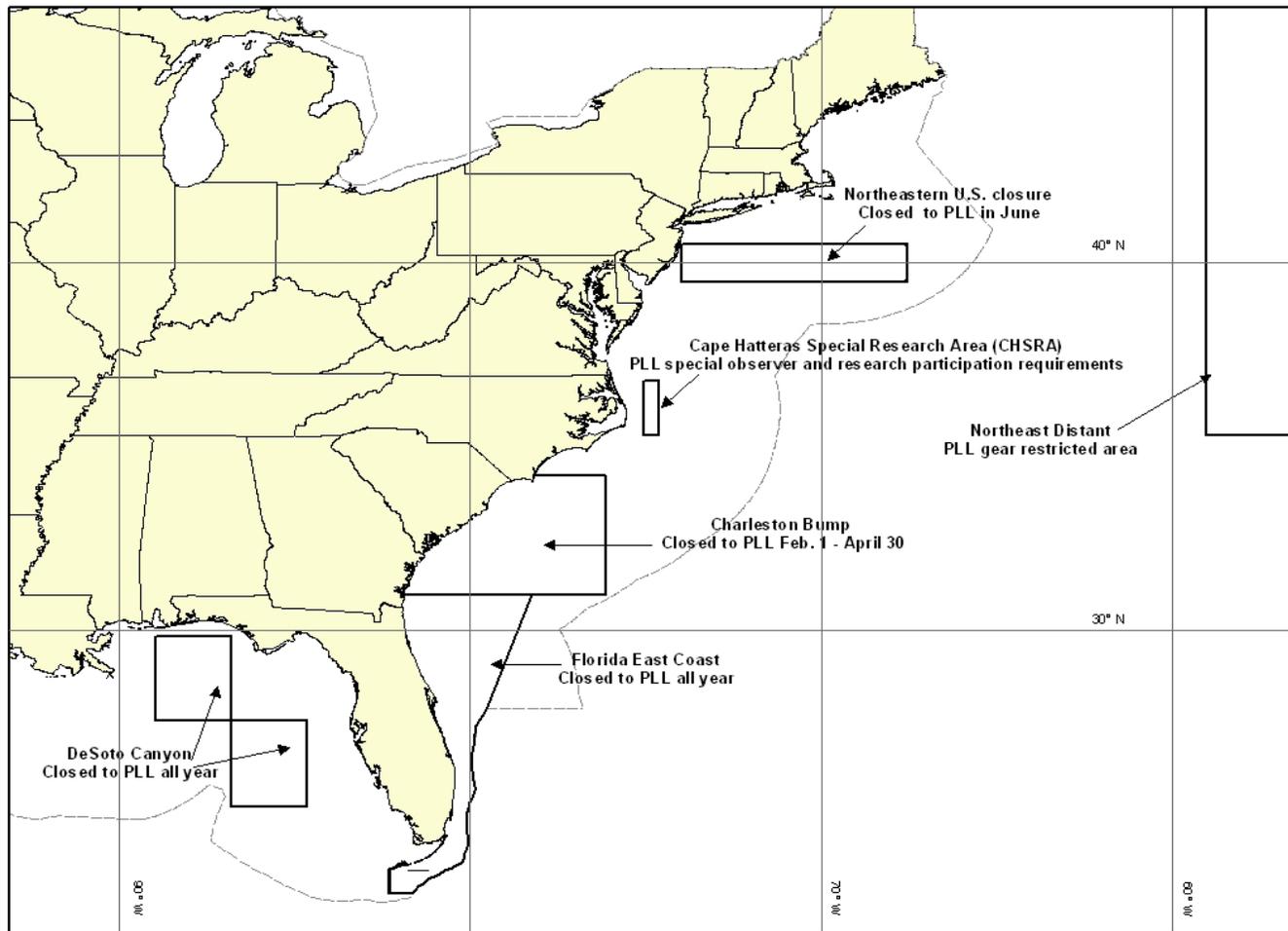
- Limited access permits
- VMS & Dealer reporting

2000 - 2001: Regulatory Amendment to 1999 HMS FMP

- Live bait prohibition in GOM to reduce billfish bycatch
- Three PLL area closures to reduce bycatch of billfish and undersized swordfish (Desoto Canyon (Nov. 2000); Charleston Bump & East Florida Coast (March 2001))



Pelagic Longline Closed Areas





Sea Turtle Bycatch Issues

2002: Portion of NED closed to PLL vessels; Dip nets and line cutters become required equipment

2001 – 2003: Joint NOAA/Industry NED research conducted to reduce sea turtle interactions and mortalities

June 2004: PLL BiOp concludes that the PLL fishery is not likely to jeopardize loggerheads, but is still likely to jeopardize leatherbacks. Current ITS established

July 2004: To avoid jeopardy, NMFS implements PLL circle hooks & bait requirements, requires careful handling and release tools, requires sea turtle placards and adherence to protocols, reopens NED w/ 18⁰ circle hooks & bait requirements (69 FR 40734)



2006 Consolidated HMS FMP

- Implements mandatory safe handling and release workshops for PLL and BLL vessel owners and operators. These efforts are ongoing and result in certification of the entire PLL fleet since 2006. Keeps fleet operating in accordance with the 2004 PLL BiOp.
- Continued to allow some fishermen to utilize buoy gear by authorizing the gear in the commercial SWO directed fishery for SWO Directed & SWO Handgear permits only



SWO Regulatory and Administrative Actions Since 2006 FMP

- June 2007: Swordfish Revitalization Final Rule (72 FR 31688)
 - Amended vessel upgrading restrictions for PLL vessels
 - One-time upgrade restriction removed for all LAPs
 - Increased incidental and recreational retention limits
- July 2008: Final rule (73 FR 38144) to allow Atlantic tunas longline LAPs that had been expired for more than one year to be renewed by the most recent permit holder
- December 2009: At recommendation of HMS Advisory Panel, the Atlantic Tunas Longline permit was moved to SE Permits Office



2009 PLL Marine Mammal Take Reduction Plan (PLTRP)

- May 2009 Final Rule (74 FR 23349)
 - Established Cape Hatteras Special Research area to reduce marine mammal bycatch (notification & observer coverage)
 - Mid-Atlantic Bight 20 nautical-mile upper limit on mainline length
 - Marine Mammal Safe Handling and Release Placards displayed in both wheelhouse and on working deck
 - Modified Safe Handling and Release Workshop curriculum
 - Increased observer coverage to 12-15% (within funding constraints) throughout all Atlantic PLL fisheries that interact with marine mammals



Other Swordfish Revitalization Efforts (Non-Regulatory)

- Partnerships and Communications spearheaded increased efforts in SWO marketing
- NMFS featured swordfish at several prominent seafood trade shows and food marketing events (Boston, Brussels, New Orleans)
- Developed 1-page swordfish fact sheet
- Met with industry representatives to discuss swordfish marketing
- Created Fish Watch and Fish Watch Fact Sheet
- Industry Efforts: Included brochure and outreach
- Industry Efforts: Current Marine Stewardship Council review of SE SWO fisheries



Accomplishments: Improved N. Atlantic SWO Stock Status

1996: $B/B_{msy} = 0.58$

2002: $B/B_{msy} = 0.94$

2006: $B/B_{msy} = 0.99$ (total TAC of 14,000 mt ww established through 2008)

2009: $B/B_{msy} = 1.05$ (total TAC of 13,700 mt ww established through 2010)



Impacts of SWO Revitalization (Increased Incidental Landings)

Year	Number of records	Number SWO kept (range)	Total number SWO kept (est. pounds)	Number of vessels w/at least 1 SWO kept	Average number of SWO kept per vessel ¹	Percent SFI vessels that kept at least one SWO
2003	670	0-4	139 (13,510)	14	1.08 (129 trips)	14.1
2004	712	0-5	133 (10,822)	16	0.82 (162 trips)	16.2
2005	663	0-9	148 (12,342)	17	0.78 (189 trips)	18.7
2006	449	0-5	139 (13,411)	14	1.09 (127 trips)	16.3
2007 ²	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2008	672	0-30	488 (39,683)	22	3.30 (148 trips)	29.7
2009 ³	677	0-28	426 (44,529)	20	4.01 (105 trips)	25.3

¹ Only trips from those vessels that landed at least one swordfish per year

² 2007 not analyzed due to the implementation of new incidental catch limits

³ Data for 2009 are preliminary



Impacts of SWO Revitalization (Increase In Potential Vessel Sizes)

Size Range (length (ft.))	No. of SFD Permits	No. of SKD Permits	No. of ATL Permits
100 +	35	10	41
90 - 99	26	7	34
80 - 89	36	20	39
70 - 79	32	15	45
60 - 69	33	32	47
50 - 59	31	57	34
40 - 49	19	58	19

Over 60 SWO permits can be issued to vessels > 90 ft. (range 90 ft. – 197 ft.).



Accomplishments: Atlantic Tunas Longline Permit moved to SE Permits Office

- Increased efficiency in permit transfers, renewals, and changes in permit information
- Consistency in administration and business procedures
- Improved record retrieval and tracking of permit history through time



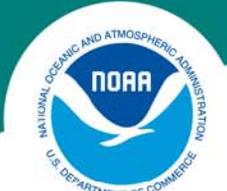
Challenges: Attainment of Quota

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Baseline Quota	2,219	2,219	2,219	2,915	2,937	2,937	2,937	2,937	2,937	2,937
Quota Carried Over	0	549	1,479	1,348	2,275	3,359	4,691	1,468	1,468	1,468
Adjusted Quota	2,219	2,768	3,698	4,263	5,212	6,296	7,628	4,406	4,406	4,406
Landings	2,017	1,581	1,747	1,822	1,665	1,471	1,291	1,167	1,696	1,863
Total Under-harvest	201	1,025	1,616	2,422	3,528	4,806	6,318	3,220	2,692	2,543

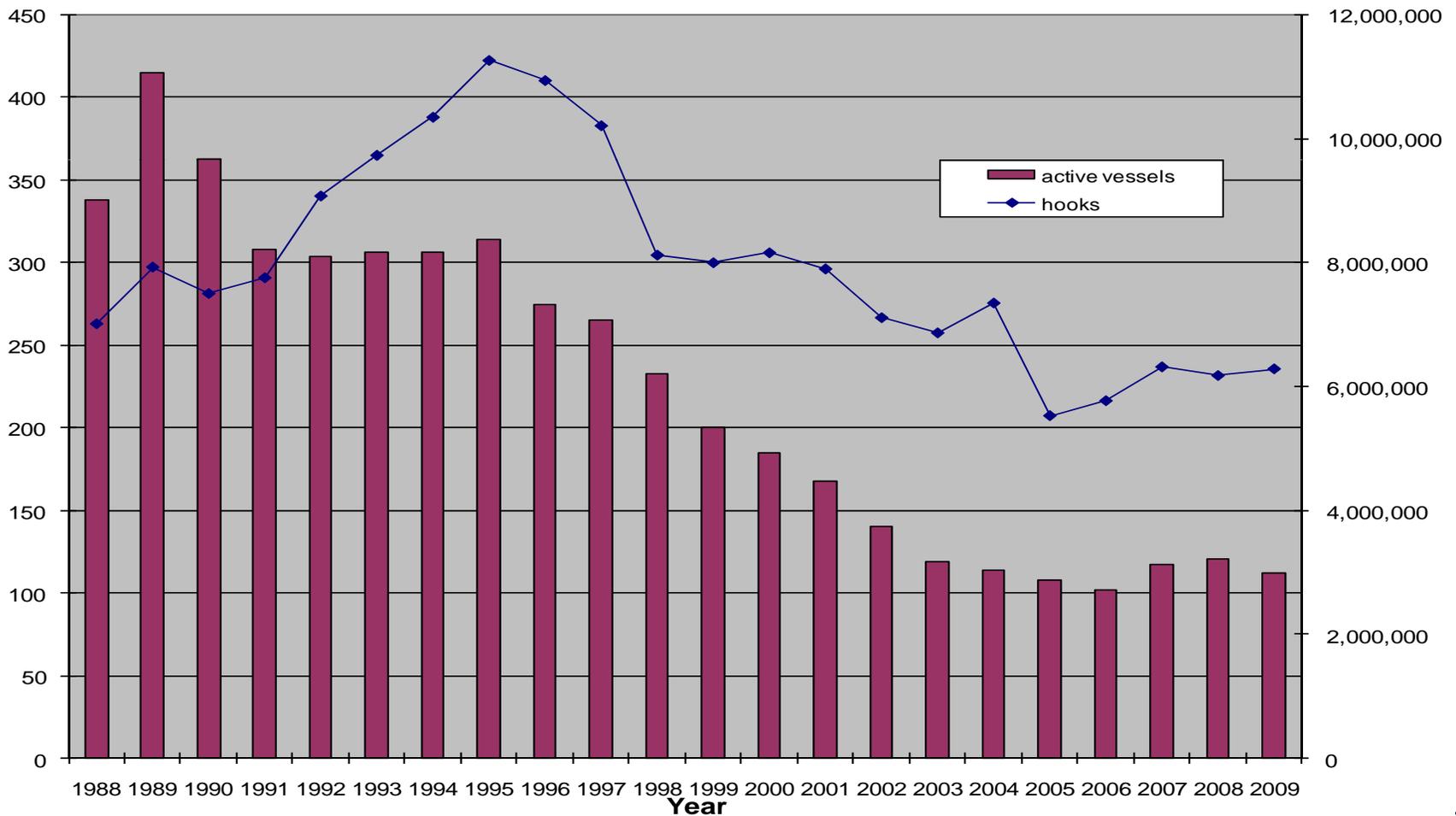
As reported by NMFS in mt dw. (2000 - 2006 landings reported for fishing year, June 1- May 31;

2007 - 2009 landings for calendar year, Jan. 1 - Dec. 31).

2009 = 42% of adjusted quota and 63% of baseline quota.



Challenges: Number of Active SWO PLL Vessels



Source: 2009 ICCAT National Report



Challenges: Ongoing Sea Turtle Bycatch Issues

March 2010: FWS/NMFS determined there are nine Distinct Population Segments (DPS) of loggerheads and proposed to list two as “threatened” & seven as “endangered.” Proposed to list the Northwest Atlantic DPS as “endangered.”

“...unlikely that (fishery bycatch) mortality can be significantly reduced across the range of the (NW Atlantic) DPS...”

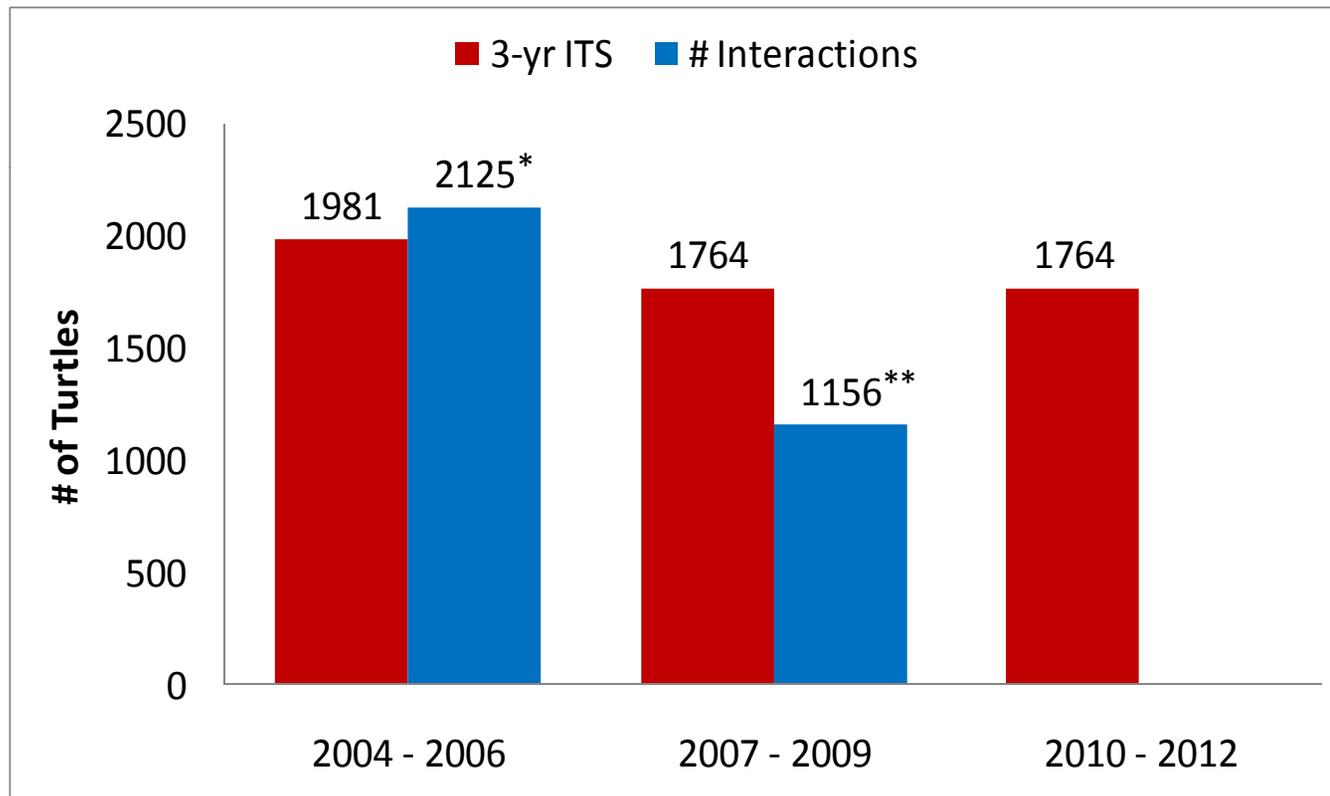
“Although regulatory mechanisms are in place that should address direct and incidental take of NW Atlantic loggerheads these...are insufficient or are not being implemented effectively...”

These statements include all fisheries (domestic and international)

Comment Period Closes – June 14, 2010 (75 FR 12598)



Leatherback Sea Turtles

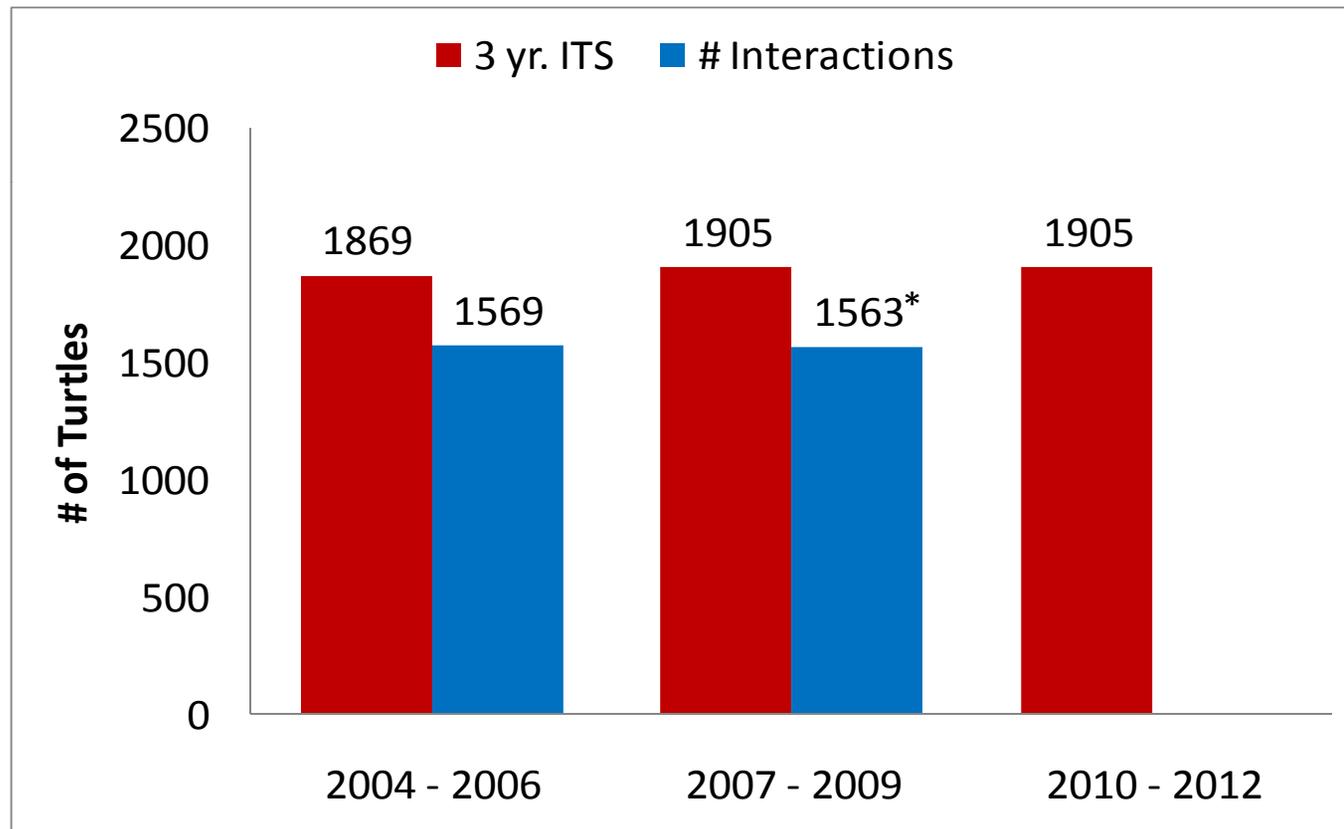


* Over 47% of interactions during 2004-2006 occurred prior to implementation of circle hooks in Q3 2004

** Interactions for 2009 are preliminary



Loggerhead Sea Turtles



* Interactions for 2009 are preliminary



Challenges: PLL Bluefin Tuna Landings & Quota Allocation

Landings Reported by Permit Category*	Total Tuna	Weight (lbs)	Avg. Weight (lbs)	Weight (mt)	Quota (mt)	% Quota Taken
Longline	601	285,682	475.3	129.6	99.3	130.5%
-North	398	167,299	420.3	75.9	54.7	138.7%
-South	203	118,383	583.2	53.7	44.6	120.4%

*Dead discards are not yet available for 2009 but must be accounted for; the 2008 figure of 173 mt is used as a proxy.

2009 Large Medium & Giant BFT Landings



Challenges: Provide Additional Opportunities in U.S. Commercial SWO Fishery

- In summary, the North Atlantic SWO stock is rebuilt but U.S. SWO landings are below the ICCAT-recommended quota
- NMFS must consider several important priorities when managing HMS including:
 - Reduction of bycatch and bycatch mortality
 - Undersized fish
 - Billfish
 - Sea turtles
 - Marine mammals
 - Rebuilding overfished stocks in Atlantic HMS fisheries such as BFT and BLF



Challenges: Provide Additional Opportunities in U.S. Commercial SWO Fishery (cont.)

- A combination of factors have contributed to the overall long-term decline of U.S. SWO landings:
 - Management measures
 - Increased fuel prices
 - Low ex-vessel prices
 - Competition from less expensive, more available, imports
- In light of these factors, NMFS requested comments on several potential regulatory changes described in an ANPR published in 2009, including the concept of a General Commercial Handgear Permit (GCHP).



HMS General Commercial Handgear Permit Concept

CURRENTLY

The Atlantic Tunas General category permit allows for the commercial harvest of tunas only (with rod & reel, handline, harpoon, bandit gear, and green-stick)

POTENTIAL OPTIONS

- Expand the allowable species to include SWO and/or SHK
- Other considerations:
 - Open vs. limited access
 - Authorized species
 - Retention limits
 - Tournament participation
 - Bycatch and bycatch mortality
 - HMS Reporting Requirements



HMS General Commercial Handgear Permit Concept (cont.)

- What are the benefits of an open versus limited access HMS General Commercial Handgear Permit?
- If SWO and/or SHK are allowed, what retention limit should apply if any?
- Should participation in HMS tournaments and landing of billfish in tournaments continue to be allowed?
- How can impacts to the value of SWO and SHK limited access permits be minimized?
- What data collection methods might be utilized?
- If fish are caught, but not sold, what reporting mechanism might be appropriate?



HMS General Commercial Handgear Permit – Comments Received

NMFS received comments including, but not limited to:

- Both support and opposition for an HMS GCHP
 - Support for new opportunities to enter the SWO fishery
 - Caution about avoiding increases in user group and gear type conflicts
 - Such a permit will devalue existing limited access permits
 - Concern about additional fishing effort in South Florida and potential effects on North Atlantic SWO stock
 - Concern about increases in swordfish landings in South Florida causing local prices to decrease



Update on HMS General Commercial Handgear Permit

- NMFS continues to consider the GCHP concept
- To date, no decisions have been made
- Additional public meetings to gather additional input may occur later this year



Other SWO Fishery Comments Received

- Suggestions for NMFS to explore other ways to increase commercial SWO landings:
 - Pelagic longline closed areas should be reopened
 - Swordfish incidental permit holders should be allowed to use buoy gear
 - Vessel length and horsepower upgrade restrictions on Swordfish Handgear permitted vessels should be removed
 - More buoy gear should be allowed to be used by SWO Handgear permitted vessels
 - Limited access permit leasing should be allowed to improve access to the fishery
- Concern about current and additional amount of buoy gear used in South Florida
- Concern about non-reporting of SWO landings
- Disagreement with the science indicating that swordfish stocks are rebuilt



Recent Swordfish Fishery Research

- East Florida Coast PLL Closed Area Study
 - NMFS issued EFP in 2008 to conduct research in East Florida Coast and Charleston Bump PLL closed areas to compare catch rates and bycatch interactions within and outside closed areas under current fishing conditions
- Characterization of the Catch by Buoy Gear in Southeast Florida
 - NOAA Cooperative Research Program (NA07NMF4540075)
 - Characterized the target and bycatch species and disposition within the directed swordfish buoy gear fishery



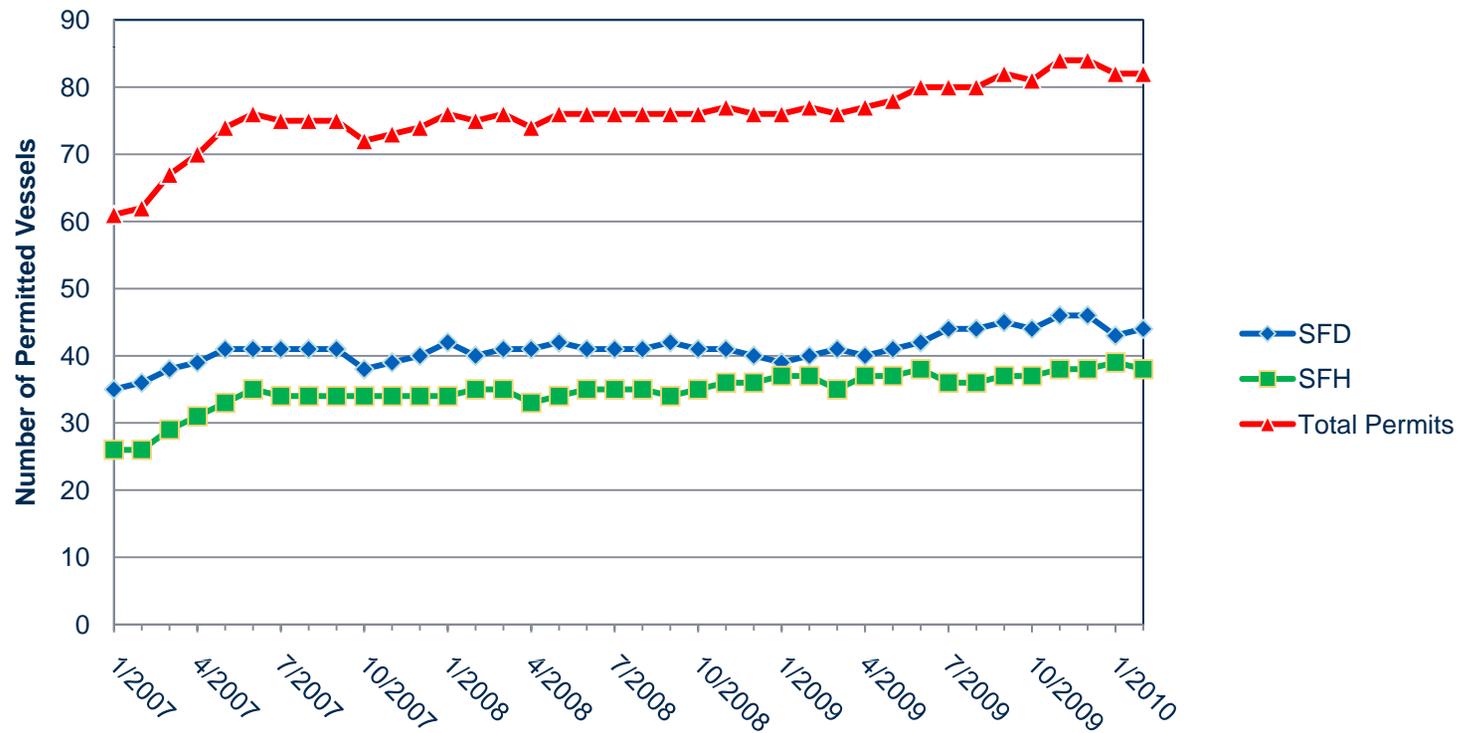
Buoy Gear / User Group Conflict

NMFS has received:

- Reports of stolen buoy gear
- Reports of fishermen finding unmarked/derelict buoy gear
- Reports of fish stolen from legally set buoy gear
- Comments from constituents concerned about potential negative impacts of current fishing effort in the EFC
 - Day deep-dropping on large female fish
 - Night buoy gear and rod and reel effort on juvenile fish
- Comments expressing concern regarding the expansion of buoy gear fishery in S. Florida



Vessels Permitted to Use Buoy Gear with Homeport in South Florida (Atlantic Coast from Cape Canaveral Area South to the Keys)



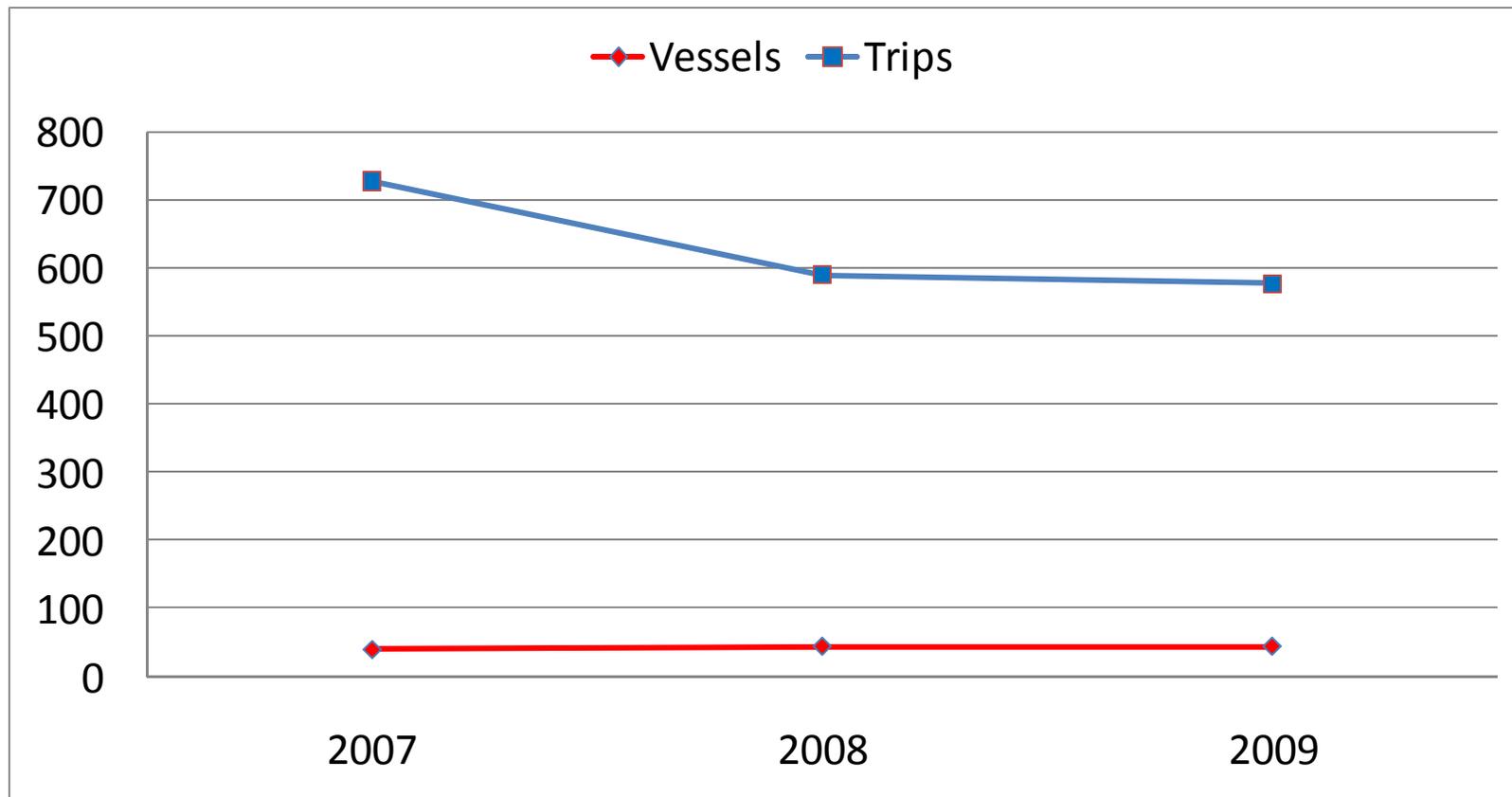


EFC Buoy Gear Effort and Performance (Logbook Data)

Buoy Gear	2007	2008	2009
Vessels	39	44	44
Trips	727	590	577
Gears Set/Trip	11.0	11.3	11.7
Total Hooks	11,362	8,786	9,221
Average # Hooks/Gear	1.4	1.7	1.4
SWO Kept	2,799	1,818	1,740
SWO RA	1,530	1,002	665
SWO DD	128	77	44

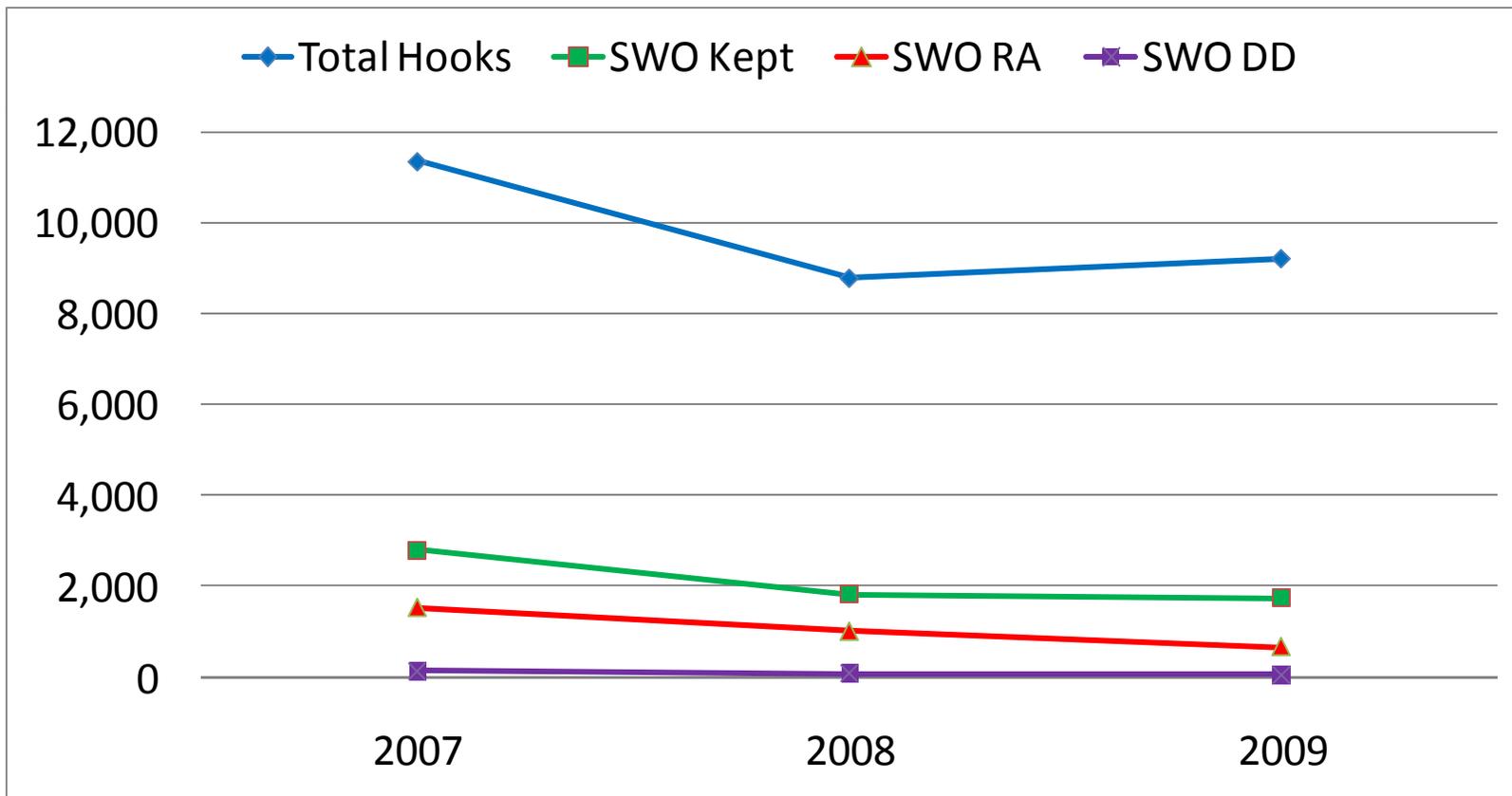


EFC Buoy Gear Effort (Logbook Data)





EFC Buoy Gear Performance (Logbook Data)





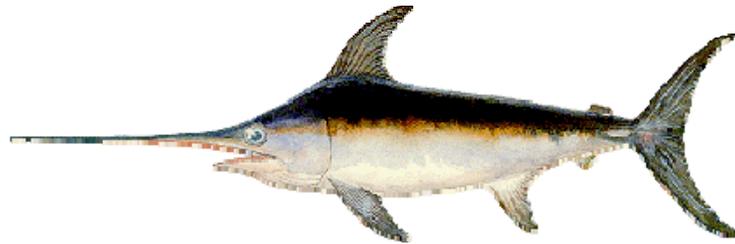
We Need Your Insight.....

- NMFS has received many comments from various constituents in the South Florida SWO fishery
- SWO directed permits have increased, but buoy gear effort is flat or declining over the past 3 years
- Shifts in the recreational rod & reel fishery have distributed effort from night to daytime

NMFS is interested in hearing and understanding more about the specific issues regarding swordfishing in South Florida



Looking Forward



- **All Things Considered:**
 - Rebuilt SWO stock
 - Quota underharvest (with improving trends)
 - Bycatch constraints/concerns – Sea turtles, BFT, BLF, mammals
 - Requests for additional opportunities in the SWO fishery – HMS GCHP, SWO Incidental buoy gear, PLL closures, Vessel upgrading, Permit leasing, etc.
 - User Group / Gear Conflicts
- **Future Actions???**

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The End

Thank You!!!