

Science, Service, Stewardship



Commercial Swordfish Management

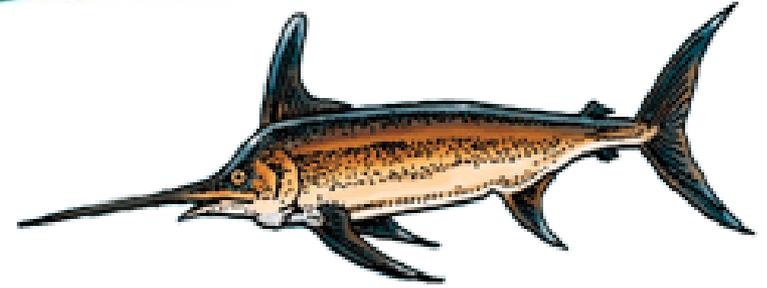
Amendment 8 to the Consolidated HMS
Fishery Management Plan:
Status Update

**NOAA
FISHERIES
SERVICE**

September 20, 2012



Outline



- Background/Status Update
- Pre-Draft Comments & Recent Information
- Current Alternatives Under Consideration
 - Vessel Permitting
 - Swordfish Retention Limits
 - Commercial Catch Reporting
- Questions for HMS Advisory Panel
- Timeline



Background

- North Atlantic swordfish are not overfished ($B_{2009}/B_{MSY} = 1.05$) and overfishing is not occurring ($F_{2008}/F_{MSY} = 0.76$)
- More and larger swordfish available on historical fishing grounds
- Swordfish limited access permits difficult and expensive to obtain
- Persistent U.S. swordfish quota underharvests (~ 70% of baseline quota from 2007 – 2011).
- Expansion of pelagic longline fishery is restricted due to the bycatch of protected species and non-target species
- NMFS has received many requests (including from HMS AP) to provide more opportunities to use rod & reel, handline, harpoon, bandit gear, and other gear to commercially harvest swordfish



Need for Action

- U.S. fleet has not fully harvested its ICCAT swordfish quota allocation in recent years.
- Other ICCAT parties have requested additional North Atlantic swordfish quota to be transferred from U.S. allocation.
- Management measures to provide additional opportunities to harvest swordfish could increase landings and more fully utilize the North Atlantic swordfish quota allocation.



Swordfish Handgear Fishery

- Rod and Reel, Handline, Harpoon, Bandit Gear
- Handgears are “tended,” highly selective with regard to target species, and may have lower post-release mortality on undersized fish and protected resources
 - ESA – Low bycatch interaction rates
 - MMPA - Category III fishery
 - EFH - Low risk of impacts
- Handgears may provide an opportunity to more fully harvest quota
 - 2011: Handgears accounted for ~ 5% of commercial swordfish landings



Status Update

- ANPR Published: June 1, 2009 (74 FR 26174)
- Pre-Draft Presented to HMS AP: March 14, 2012
- Currently:
 - Considering AP & Public Comments on Pre-Draft
 - Considering New Information
 - Drafting Environmental Assessment (EA) & Proposed Rule
 - Examining Operational Aspects in Uncertain Budget Climate
 - ✓ Regional Differences in Fishery
 - ✓ Permit Administration
 - ✓ Tagging & Reporting Program



Pre-Draft Comments

- Provide Estimate of Additional Landings & New Entrants
- Identify Quota Category for New Permit(s)
- Support for Open Access Swordfish Permit
- Consider Commercial Fishing History as Criteria for Permit
- Keep Permit Separate from Tunas General Category
- Support for Tagging Program



Pre-Draft Comments (cont.)

- Consider Regional Differences in Fishery
- Authorize Buoy Gear, but not in Florida

- NMFS Received a Wide Range of Opinions on Retention Limit
 - Select a high limit (6 or more) to catch the quota and support offshore trips that need a higher limit to be profitable.
 - Select a low limit (3 or less) to minimize potential impacts on current swordfish permit holders.
 - Select a very low limit (2 or less) for Florida's east coast to reduce gear conflicts.



Recent Information

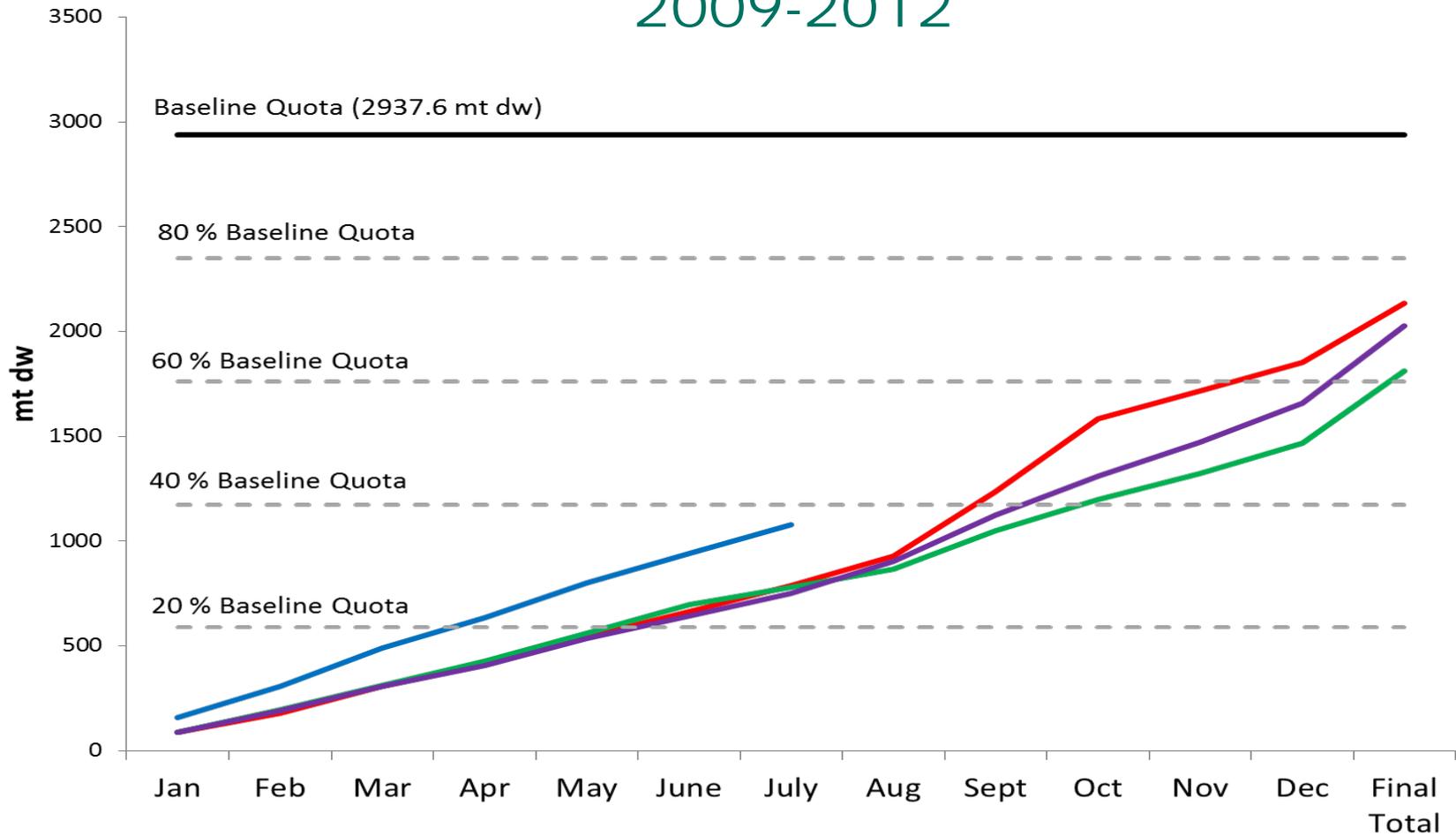
- Increased trend in landings through July 2012 (>80% of baseline quota in 2012??)
- 2012 regulatory changes that could impact U.S. ICCAT quota utilization:
 - 25% under-harvest rollover allowance (previously - 50% of baseline) reduces adjusted quota;
 - New minimum size requirement (from 29" CK to 25" CK) anticipated to increase landings, but not U.S. reported catch to ICCAT.*

*Note – U.S. reported catch to ICCAT includes dead discards



- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012

United States Swordfish Landings 2009-2012





Potential Alternatives Vessel Permitting

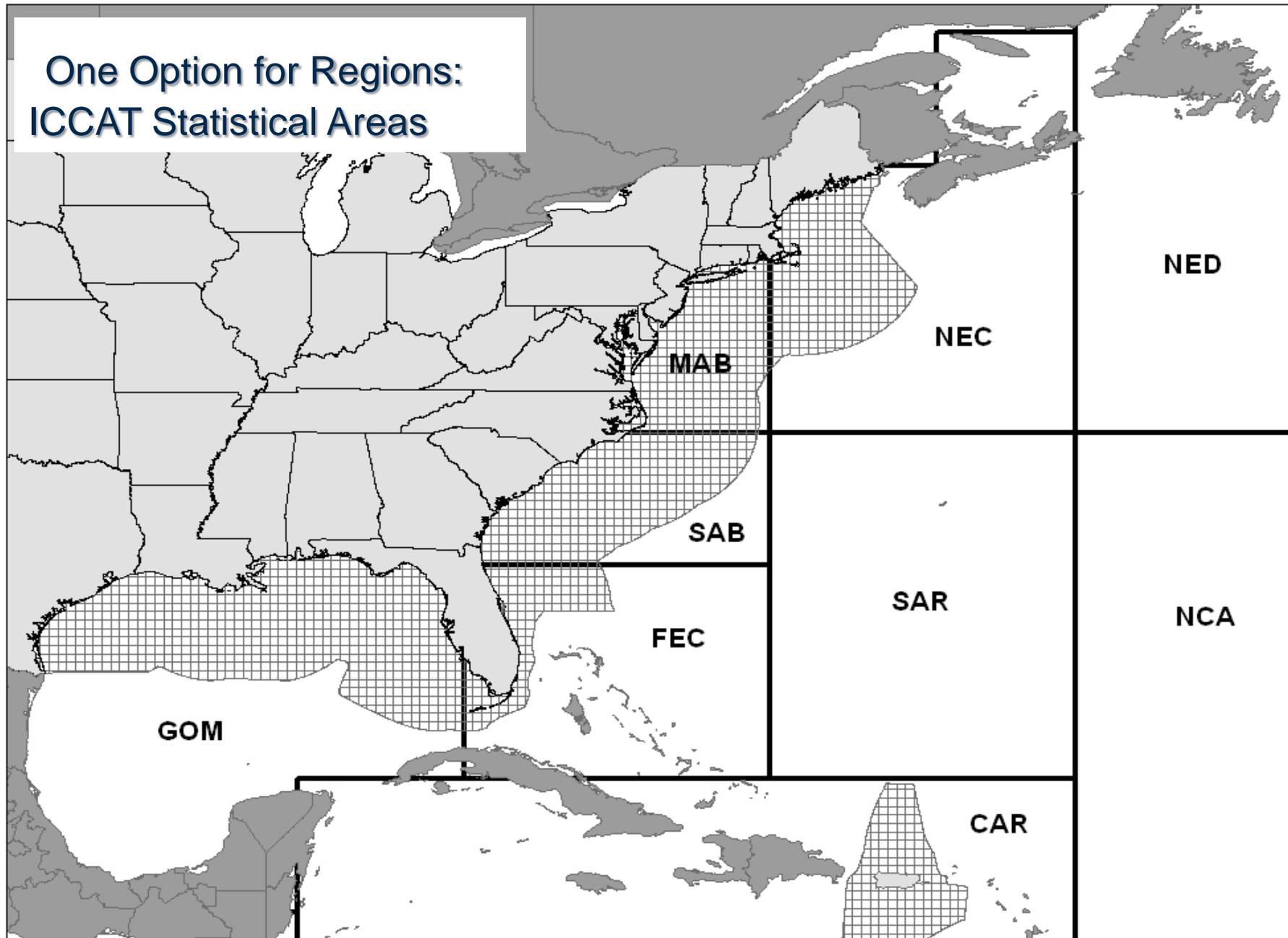
- No Action: Maintain Current Swordfish LAP program
- Establish Open Access Commercial Swordfish Permit
 - Add swordfish to existing Atlantic tunas General category permit
 - Add swordfish to existing Atlantic tunas Harpoon category permit
 - Allow CHB permit holders to fish under open access swordfish commercial regulations when not on a for-hire trip.
 - Create a new separate open access commercial permit
- Establish New Limited Access Commercial Swordfish Permit

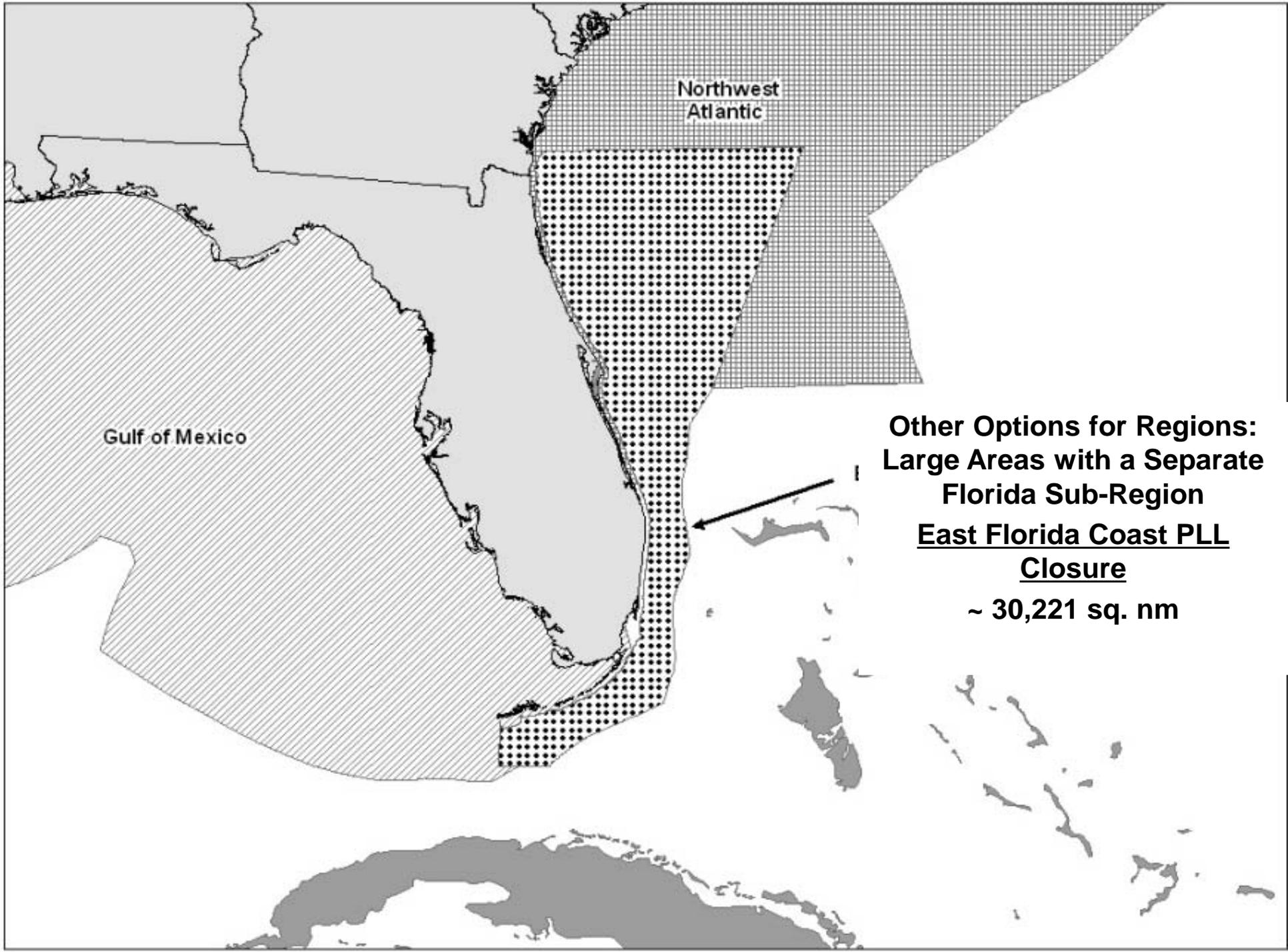


Potential Alternatives Swordfish Retention Limits

- Coastwide 0 to 6 limit for new/modified permit and codify one limit within range
- Coastwide 0 to 6 limit for new/modified permit, codify one limit within range, and establish in-season authority to adjust limit
- Establish swordfish management regions, a 0 to 6 limit for each region, and codify one limit for each region with in-season authority to adjust that limit with each region
 - Several options to designate regions to account for unique environmental and biological factors affecting swordfish stocks

One Option for Regions:
ICCAT Statistical Areas

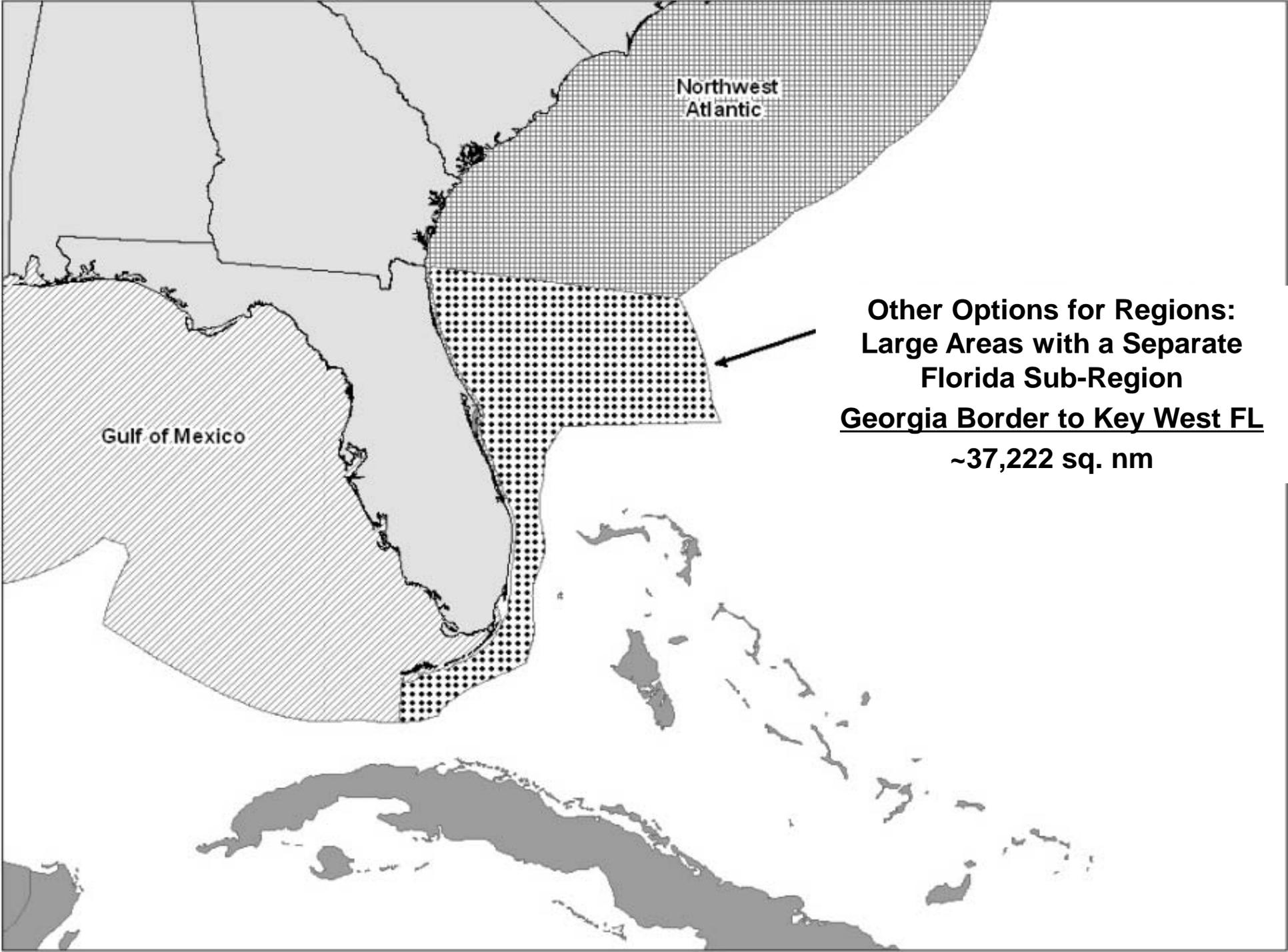




Northwest Atlantic

Gulf of Mexico

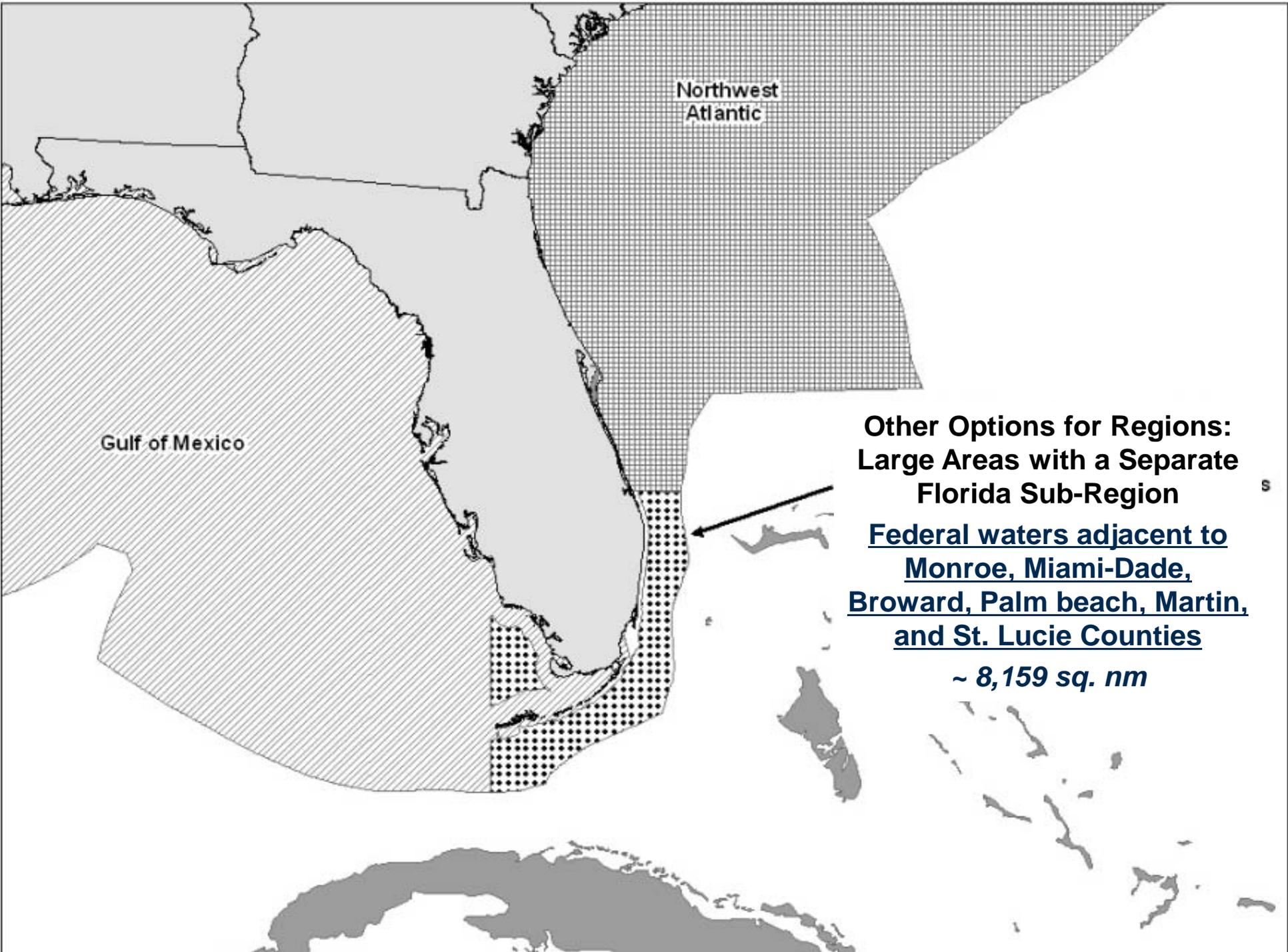
**Other Options for Regions:
Large Areas with a Separate
Florida Sub-Region
East Florida Coast PLL
Closure
~ 30,221 sq. nm**



Northwest
Atlantic

Gulf of Mexico

**Other Options for Regions:
Large Areas with a Separate
Florida Sub-Region
Georgia Border to Key West FL
~37,222 sq. nm**



Northwest Atlantic

Gulf of Mexico

**Other Options for Regions:
Large Areas with a Separate
Florida Sub-Region**

**Federal waters adjacent to
Monroe, Miami-Dade,
Broward, Palm beach, Martin,
and St. Lucie Counties**

~ 8,159 sq. nm



Potential Alternatives Commercial Catch Reporting

- HMS logbook reporting, if selected, and all sales be only to permitted swordfish dealers (status quo)
- Swordfish could be tagged by some or all commercial swordfish permit holders and all swordfish be reported in HMS logbooks, if selected, and all sales only to permitted swordfish dealers
 - Tag only swordfish landed by vessels issued new permit (~ 6,500 tags)
 - Tag all swordfish except PLL-caught (~ 11,500 tags)
 - Tag all swordfish (~ 55,000 tags)
 - Tag all swordfish from designated management region(s) (~ 20,000 tags)

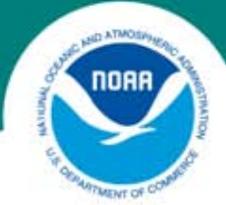


Swordfish Tagging Program: Options

- Provide tags to permitted swordfish dealers (*i.e.*, tag before offloading)? ↔ ~ 47 – 191 swordfish dealers
- Provide tags to swordfish vessel permit holders (*i.e.*, tag when brought onboard)? ↔ ~ 1,845 – 4,470 fishermen

Who receives tags? This could affect:

- When swordfish are tagged;
- Program administration and compliance burden;
- Enforceability;
- Dealer/fisherman relationship.



Swordfish Tagging Program: Options

Other Issues:

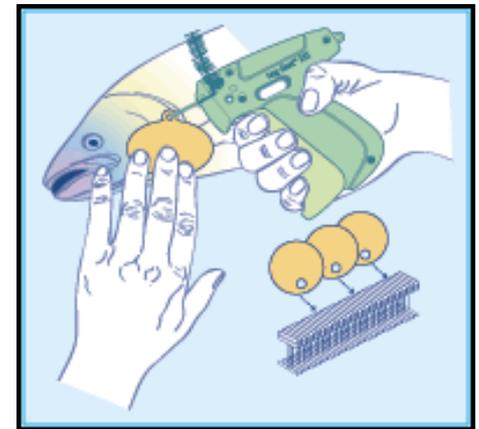
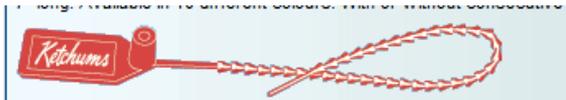
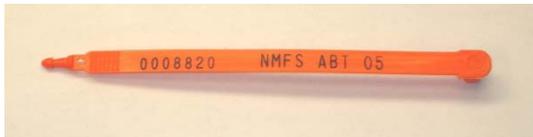
- Physical location of tag and method of application
- Required information on tag (pre-printed or self-applied?)
- Reporting requirements (dealer reports, logbooks, etc.)
- Length of time tag needs to be on fish (chain of custody)
- Swordfish in transport on land
- Tag transferability
- Fees/costs
- Ordering and administration



Swordfish Tagging Program

Tag type:

- Pre-printed tags (cinch up or zip-tie type)?
- Blank tags?





Swordfish Tagging Program Scope, Cost, and Effectiveness

- Purpose of tag program? Enforcement? Reporting?
- Tagging of some or all swordfish (by permit or region)?
- Distribution of tags to dealers or fishermen?
- Tag Type → Pre-printed or self-applied information?
- Reporting requirements (dealer reports, logbooks, etc.)?
- Length of time tag needs to be on fish (chain of custody)?
- **Do the Potential Benefits Outweigh the Potential Costs of a Tag Program?**



Additional Questions

- Appropriate swordfish retention limit(s)?
- Establishment of regions and regional management measures?
 - Which regions?
 - What measures?



Potential Timeframe

- Scoping/AP Meetings – June 2009 ANPR scoping; May 2010, September 2010, April 2011, September 2011 AP meetings
- Pre-Draft Available: March 14, 2012, AP meeting
- Potential Draft Environmental Assessment and Proposed Rule:
In progress ~ Winter 2012
- Potential Public Hearings: ~ Winter/Spring 2013
- Potential Final EA and Final Rule: ~ Spring 2013
- Potential Effective Date: ~ Summer 2013



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