

IX. TOURNAMENTS

An Atlantic HMS tournament is any fishing competition in which participants must register, or otherwise enter, or in which a prize or award is offered for catching or landing HMS.¹²¹ This includes fishing tournaments where the target species is not an Atlantic HMS, but where participants receive points, prizes, or awards for catching Atlantic HMS. The following regulations pertain to tournaments conducted from ports within any Atlantic or Gulf of Mexico coastal state, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

REGISTRATION

Tournament operators are required to register their tournament with NOAA Fisheries at least four weeks prior to the start of the tournament.¹²²

1. **To register a tournament**, complete and sign a registration form from <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/tournaments/registration.html> and submit it to one of the following:

Mail: NMFS HMS Tournament Registry 263 13 th Ave, South St. Petersburg, FL 33701	Fax: (727) 824-5398 E-mail: HMS TournamentRegistry@noaa.gov
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2. Registration is not complete until the tournament operator has received a **confirmation number** from NOAA Fisheries.¹²³

A public list of registered Atlantic HMS tournaments is available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/tournaments>. Tournament participants are encouraged to check this list to comply with Atlantic HMS fishing authorizations and reporting requirements.

Please direct questions about tournament registration to (727) 824-5399.

CATCH REPORTING¹²⁴

NOAA Fisheries will notify tournament operators if their tournament is selected for catch reporting. **All billfish tournaments are selected for reporting.** Reports are due within 7 days after fishing has ended.¹²⁵

3. **To report tournament catch**, complete a reporting form from <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/tournaments/reporting.html> and submit it to one of the following:

Mail: Tournament Reporting 75 Virginia Beach Drive Miami, FL 33149	Fax: (305) 361-4562 E-mail: tournaments@noaa.gov
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Please direct questions about tournament reporting to (305) 361-4214.

Participation in other NOAA Fisheries surveys, such as the Large Pelagics Survey or the Marine Recreational Information Program, does not fulfill reporting obligations and tournament operators must still report all catch and landings as instructed on the reporting form.

PARTICIPANTS

To participate in a registered Atlantic HMS tournament, the vessel owner must have one of the following permits:

1. HMS Angling,
2. HMS Charter/Headboat, or
3. Atlantic Tunas General category* permit, or
4. Swordfish General Commercial**.¹²⁶

Make sure an HMS tournament is registered with NOAA Fisheries before participating. Registered Atlantic HMS tournaments are listed at

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/tournaments>. HMS permit holders do not need to report their recreational North Atlantic swordfish or billfish landings to NOAA Fisheries if the fish are entered in a registered tournament. If billfish or swordfish are landed but not entered in a registered tournament, it is the permit holder's responsibility to report them to NOAA Fisheries (see billfish and swordfish sections for recreational reporting instructions).¹²⁷

* Atlantic Tunas General category permit holders may fish recreationally for billfish, swordfish, and sharks **only** if the vessel owner has registered for, has paid an entry fee to, and is fishing under the rules of a registered Atlantic HMS tournament. When fishing in a registered Atlantic HMS tournament, Atlantic Tunas General category permit holders must comply with HMS Angling category regulations for swordfish, sharks, and billfishes, and with General category regulations for Atlantic tunas (i.e., General category permit holders may not fish for or land bluefin tuna < 73" CFL under any circumstances).¹²⁸

** Swordfish General Commercial permit holders may fish recreationally for billfish, tunas, and sharks **only** if the vessel owner has registered for, has paid an entry fee to, and is fishing under the rules of a registered Atlantic HMS tournament. When fishing in a registered Atlantic HMS tournament, Swordfish General Commercial permit holders must comply with HMS Angling category regulations for tunas, sharks, and billfishes, and with Swordfish General Commercial regulations for swordfish (i.e., swordfish regional retention limits).

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS

All Atlantic HMS recreational fishing regulations (size limits, bag limits, gear restrictions, and possession restrictions) apply to Atlantic HMS tournament participants.¹²⁹

Billfish Tournaments

Anglers fishing from Atlantic HMS permitted vessels and participating in Atlantic billfish tournaments must use only non-offset circle hooks when deploying natural bait or natural bait/artificial lure combinations. A billfish tournament is defined as any fishing tournament that awards points or prizes for billfishes, even if billfishes are not the main species targeted in the tournament. Billfish tournament anglers may deploy "J"-hooks only if they are fishing with artificial lures.¹³⁰ NOAA Fisheries encourages the use of circle hooks by non-tournament anglers to reduce post-release mortality of Atlantic billfishes.