

Important Phone Numbers

Southeast HMS Office	727-824-5399
Northeast HMS Office	978-281-9260
HMS Headquarters Office	301-713-2347
Enforcement Hotline	800-853-1964
HMS Infoline	800-894-5528
Southeast Permits Office	888-872-8862

Sign up for Atlantic HMS News

An electronic newsletter of the latest Atlantic highly migratory species related actions from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms.newslist>

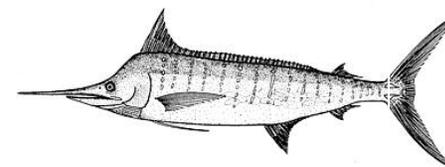
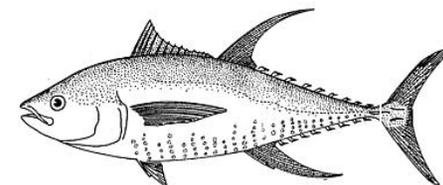


We value interest, questions, and comments.
Please feel free to contact us.
www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Highly Migratory Species Management Division
(301) 713-2347
NOAA Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway
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Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Science, Service, Stewardship

Federal Highly Migratory Species Management and Public Participation



NOAA
FISHERIES
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2009

Office of Sustainable Fisheries
Highly Migratory Species
Management Division



U.S. Department of Commerce | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service

The Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) manages the fisheries for tuna, swordfish, marlin, sailfish, and shark in U.S. Federal waters of the Atlantic Ocean, including the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and USVI) and Gulf of Mexico, to ensure long-term, healthy, and sustainable fisheries for these species. Collectively known as HMS, they are some of the most highly prized and sought after fish in the world.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: FROM REPORTING CATCHES TO MAKING REGULATIONS

Commercial and recreational fishermen, academic researchers, and the general public play a crucial role in providing essential catch and landings data that are used for the management of HMS. Their comments on proposed regulations also help to shape the rules and regulations that apply to Atlantic HMS fishermen, such as retention limits, gear restrictions, quota allocation, and permit reporting requirements.

PERMITTING AND REPORTING – THE FISHERY COUNTS ON YOU

HMS management has both domestic and international aspects. For many HMS, including, swordfish, marlin, and most tunas, the United States is given a specific amount of fish (quota) by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) that is available to U.S. fishermen. Decisions about quota amounts are based on scientific assessments. Each year the U.S. reports domestic species-specific catches to ICCAT that are counted against these quotas. Non-reporting and underreporting of catches by U.S. fishermen to NMFS or state/territorial officials results in artificially low catches being reported to ICCAT and against U.S. quotas. This undermines the ability of the

United States to successfully negotiate for appropriate quota allocations. Underreporting also reduces the accuracy of scientific stock assessments. Preventing these problems is easy: get permitted and report your catches. Bottomline: no permit, no reports, fewer fish for the United States—and that includes you.

Recreational and some commercial Federal HMS permits (tuna) are available at <http://hmspermits.gov>.

Federal commercial swordfish and shark permit applications are processed through NMFS Southeast Region Permits Office. More information is available at: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/permits/permits.htm>.

MAKING REGULATIONS – VOICE YOUR OPINION

Public comment on proposed regulations for Atlantic HMS is critical to ensuring that NMFS takes into account the needs, limitations, and concerns of fishermen and other constituents when developing or revising fishing regulations. When developing regulations, each proposed rule change has an open comment period where the public is able to submit comments in person at public hearings and they can send in comments via mail, fax, or e-mail. All proposed changes to the Federal regulations for Atlantic HMS are published in the Federal Register. Hard copies of the Federal Register are available at most public libraries. It is available electronically at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>. The HMS Management Division also distributes e-mail updates and reminders about different actions (see how to sign up for Atlantic HMS news in this pamphlet). Remember: NMFS can't hear what isn't said, so submit your comments.

FEDERAL ATLANTIC HMS REGULATIONS — WHY, WHERE, and WHAT

The U.S. Congress gave the U.S. Secretary of Commerce the responsibility to manage Atlantic HMS under the dual authorities of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA). Under these laws, NMFS acts on behalf of the Secretary and has the authority and responsibility to manage HMS and the activities of fishermen in waters from 3 – 200 miles offshore (9 - 200 miles in waters surrounding Puerto Rico, Texas, and the West Coast of Florida), where most tunas, swordfish, and billfish are found. NMFS collaborates with many states to develop state regulations that support Federal regulations and by working cooperatively with state law enforcement to enforce Federal regulations.

Federal regulations for Atlantic HMS are developed under the Consolidated Atlantic HMS Fishery Management Plan, which is regularly amended. Currently, Federal regulations for Atlantic HMS commercial and recreational fishing include rules and requirements for: permitting • reporting • minimum sizes • bag and retention limits • allowable fishing gears • area closures • seasonal closures • restrictions on sale and purchase and, • importing and exporting, among others.

The complete set of Federal regulations for Atlantic HMS can be found in the Part 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 635. Hard copies of the CFR are available at most public libraries. It is available electronically at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>. Easy to follow compliance guides that outline the regulations can be found at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or by calling 301-713-2347.