



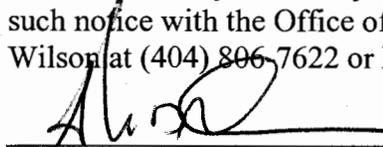
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

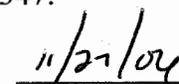
## NMFS Requests Comments on the Issuance of Exempted Fishing Permits, Scientific Research Permits, Display Permits, and Charter Permits for the Collection of Atlantic HMS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces its intent to issue 2007 Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Scientific Research Permits (SRPs), Display Permits, Letters of Acknowledgement (LOAs), and Chartering Permits for the collection of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS). These EFPs, SRPs, and Display Permits would authorize collections of a limited number of tunas, swordfish, billfish, and sharks from Federal waters in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico for the purposes of scientific data collection and public display. NMFS may also issue permits for the purpose of collecting biological samples from at-sea observer programs. Exempted fishing applications would also be considered for bycatch reduction research in closed regions of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea to test gear modifications and fishing techniques aimed to avoid incidental capture of non-target species. Any proposed research activities must be consistent with all applicable laws and regulations. NMFS will seek additional public comment on proposals potentially deemed controversial unless research is being conducted by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) scientists from bonafide NOAA research vessels. NMFS stated that it would issue EFPs for billfish tournaments to collect additional scientific data on the impacts of J-hooks when fishing for blue marlin. NMFS has received comments during the HMS Advisory Panel meeting as well as from billfish tournament directors that tournaments are not appropriate venues to collect scientific data due to the lack of standardized fishing practices and tournament operations. NMFS is still considering the value of issuing EFPs to tournaments for this type of data collection. The Agency's decision on the issuance of these EFPs will be published in a future Federal Register notice.

Written comments on these collections, research, and fishing activities will be considered by NMFS when issuing EFPs, SRPs, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits if received on or before 5 p.m., eastern standard time, on December 27, 2006. Please send comments to Margo Schulze-Haugen, Chief, Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1), NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The permit applications and copies of the regulations pertaining to EFPs, SRPs, LOAs, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits may also be requested from this address. Comments may also be sent via facsimile (fax) to (301) 713-1917 or by e-mail to SF1.101206B@noaa.gov. Include the identifier "I.D. 101206B" in the subject line of the email.

This notice is a courtesy to individuals interested in HMS fisheries activities to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Jackie Wilson at (404) 806-7622 or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at (301) 713-2347.

  
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Alan Risenhoover  
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

  
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Date