



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

## **NMFS Announces a Final Rule and Final Amendment 4 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan: U.S. Caribbean Management Measures**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will modify the regulations governing the federal small-scale highly migratory species (HMS) fisheries in the U.S. Caribbean Region. The purpose of this amendment is to enact HMS management measures that better correspond with the traditional operation of the small-scale HMS fishing fleet in the U.S. Caribbean Region and to provide us with an improved capability to monitor and sustainably manage those fisheries. We conducted extensive public scoping to better understand the differences that exist between some segments of the U.S. Caribbean HMS fisheries and the HMS fisheries that occur off the mainland of the United States. These differences include, but are not limited to: limited fishing permit and dealer permit possession; smaller vessels; limited availability of processing and cold storage facilities; shorter trips; limited profit margins; and, high local consumption of catches. These differences can sometimes create an awkward fit between current federal HMS fishing regulations and the traditional Caribbean small-scale commercial fisheries. Fishermen in the region often find these factors difficult to overcome given the limited local infrastructure and small market for their catches.

NMFS will create an HMS Commercial Caribbean Small Boat Permit (Caribbean permit) allowing fishing for and sales of bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack tunas, Atlantic swordfish, and Atlantic sharks; collect HMS landings data through existing territorial government programs; authorize specific gears; restrict the size of vessels eligible to be issued a Caribbean permit; limit the Caribbean permit to fishing in the U.S. Caribbean Region; and, specify that the Caribbean permit may not be held in combination with any other Atlantic HMS vessel permit. The Caribbean permit will be issued by the NMFS Southeast Regional Permits Office. Applications for the permit may be obtained at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/permits/permits.htm> or by calling 877-376-4877 (toll free). The permit is expected to be effective January 2, 2013.

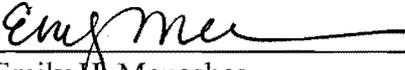
The final rule modifies regulatory text that is also amended by the HMS Electronic Dealer Reporting System (E-dealer) rulemaking (77 FR 44592). The final language included in the HMS E-dealer rulemaking is being utilized in the final rule for this action.



This notice is a courtesy to Atlantic HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of Federal Register. For further information on this final rule and final environmental assessment, Randy Blankinship, Rick Pearson, or Katie Davis at 727-824-5399, or Delisse Ortiz at 301-427-8503. Copies of the final rule and environmental assessment are available upon request from the Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone: 301-427-8503, fax: 301-713-1917). The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>.

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Emily H. Menashes  
Deputy Directory, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

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