



NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

NMFS Requests Comments on the Issuance of Exempted Fishing Permits, Scientific Research Permits, Display Permits, Letters of Acknowledgment, and Chartering Permits for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species During 2014

November 21, 2013

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces its intent to issue Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Scientific Research Permits (SRPs), Display Permits, Letters of Acknowledgment (LOAs), and Chartering Permits for the research and collection of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) in 2014. In general, EFPs and related permits would authorize collection of a limited number of tunas, swordfish, billfishes, and sharks from Federal waters in the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico for the purposes of scientific data collection and public display. Chartering permits allow the collection of HMS on the high seas or in the Exclusive Economic Zone of other nations under certain conditions.

Every year, NMFS receives applications to collect Atlantic HMS for a variety of needs including fishery independent surveys, public display, and scientific research. For the coming year, NMFS is expecting an EFP application that would request the tagging of white sharks to track their migration patterns in the Northwest Atlantic. During research activities in 2012 an unrelated, incidental mortality of a white shark tagged off the coast of South Africa. Although not anticipated, if a disproportionate number of sharks were to die as a result of this or similar research activities, then the following year, NMFS would consider that information deciding whether to issue permits to those researchers or may require additional actions to minimize the mortality of the shark before issuing any permits. NMFS requests public comment specific to this research during the comment period of this notice.

The majority of EFPs and related permits described within this annual notice relate to scientific sampling and tagging of Atlantic HMS and the impacts of the activities conducted have been previously analyzed in various environmental assessments and environmental impact statements for Atlantic HMS. NMFS intends to issue these types of permits without additional opportunity for public comment beyond what is provided in this notice. Occasionally NMFS receives applications for research activities that were not anticipated or for research that is outside the scope of general scientific sampling and tagging of Atlantic HMS or, rarely, for an activity of a particularly controversial nature. Should NMFS receive such applications, we will provide additional opportunity for the public to comment, consistent with regulations in 50 CFR 600.745.

NMFS issued 43 EFPs, SRPs, Display Permits, and LOAs in 2012 and has issued 38 such permits in 2013 to date. These permits were issued to NMFS and non-NMFS scientists, educational institutions, public aquaria, and public display collectors acquiring HMS.

Written comments on these proposed collection, research, and fishing activities will be considered when issuing EFPs, SRPs, Display Permits, and Chartering Permits if received on or before 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, December 23, 2013. Please send comments to Craig

Cockrell, Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1), NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. 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 nmfs.hms.efp2014@noaa.gov.

This notice is a courtesy to individuals interested in HMS fisheries activities to keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Craig Cockrell at (301) 427-8503.