

### NMFS Announces the Availability of Final Amendment 8 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan for Management of Atlantic Swordfish

August 20, 2013

The final rule for Amendment 8 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) is now available. This final rule will implement new and modified commercial vessel permits to retain and sell a limited number of swordfish caught on rod and reel, handline, harpoon gear, greenstick, or bandit gear. The management measures in Amendment 8 are intended to allow the United States to more fully utilize its domestic swordfish quota allocation, which is based upon the recommendation of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, and to provide additional opportunities for U.S. fishermen to harvest swordfish using selective gears that are low in bycatch, given the rebuilt status of swordfish and their resulting increased availability.

#### What will it do?

The full range of alternatives considered are included in the final environmental assessment and final rule, which can be found at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/FMP/AM8.htm>.

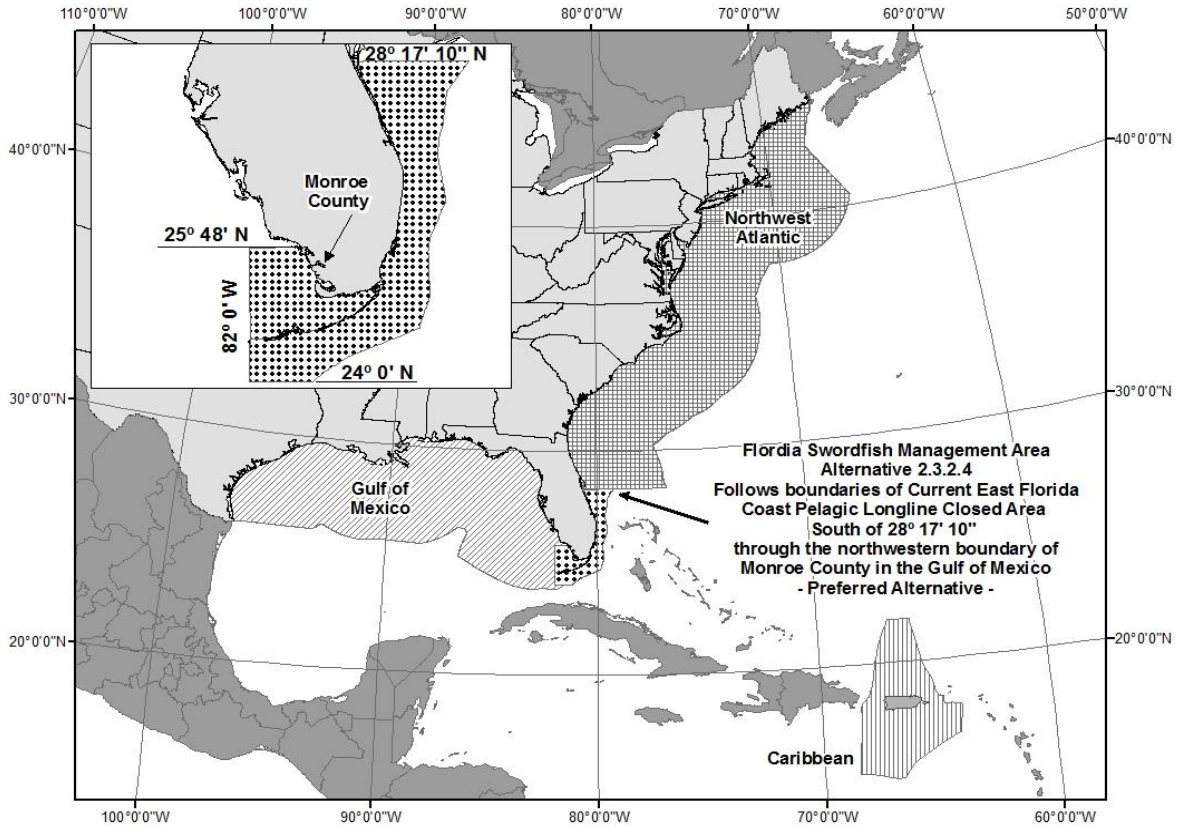
This action implements the following measures:

- 1) A new Swordfish General Commercial permit will be created that is similar to the existing Atlantic Tunas General category permit. Authorized gears under this permit include rod and reel, handline, harpoon, greenstick, and bandit gear. NMFS will send a notice through this listserve informing constituents of the availability of the new permit for the 2014 fishing year.
- 2) Effective upon issuance of a 2014 permit, HMS Charter/Headboat vessel permit holders will be authorized to fish with rod and reel and handline under open-access swordfish commercial retention limits when on a non for-hire trip.
- 3) Swordfish management regions are established based upon large reporting areas ((Northwest Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, U.S. Caribbean) and a Florida Swordfish Management Area (see figure on next page). The Florida Swordfish Management Area means the Atlantic Ocean area shoreward of the outer boundary of the U.S. EEZ from a point where latitude 28°17'10" N. lat. intersects the U.S. mainland near Rockledge, FL and proceeding due east across the barrier island near Cocoa Beach, FL to connect by straight lines the following coordinates in the order stated: 28°17'10" N. lat., 79°11'24" W. long.; then proceeding along the outer boundary of the EEZ to the intersection of the EEZ with 24°00' N. lat.; then proceeding due west to 24°00' N. lat., 82°0' W. long, then proceeding due north to 25° 48' N. lat., 82° 0' W. long., then proceeding due east to the shore near Chokoloskee, FL.
- 4) Initial default regional swordfish retention limits are as follows. Retention limits may be adjusted in-season.

**Table 1: Initial default regional swordfish retention limits.**

| Swordfish Management Region       | Retention Limit (# fish per vessel) |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Northwest Atlantic                | 3                                   |
| Gulf of Mexico                    | 3                                   |
| U.S. Caribbean                    | 2                                   |
| Florida Swordfish Management Area | 0                                   |

- 5) Swordfish caught under these permits may only be sold to federally permitted swordfish dealers.



**Figure 1: Final management regions for Final Amendment 8 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic HMS FMP. NMFS establishes initial retention limits of zero swordfish in the Florida Swordfish Management Area, 2 swordfish in the U.S. Caribbean region, and 3 swordfish in the Gulf of Mexico and Northwest Atlantic regions.**

### How can I get a Swordfish General Commercial permit?

Permits will be issued for the 2014 fishing year beginning in late November 2013. To obtain a permit go to <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/> or call 888-872-8862. The cost of a permit is approximately \$20.

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, contact Rick Pearson at 727-824-5399 or Jennifer Cudney at 301-427-8503.

Copies of the final rule, final environmental assessment, and other supporting documents 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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