

DRAFT

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Atlantic Tunas Longline Permit Holder,

On August 21, 2013, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a proposed rule in the Federal Register (78 FR 52032) introducing potential new regulations to address various management issues analyzed in Draft Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. This letter provides notification about potential additional electronic monitoring and reporting requirements that were in the proposed rule and that we may implement in the final rule, and assurances that should these requirements become finalized, any collected data would remain confidential.

The proposed rule included a measure that would require all vessels allocated an Incidental Bluefin Quota and fishing with pelagic longline gear, to install and maintain video cameras and associated data recording and monitoring equipment in order to record all longline catch and relevant data regarding pelagic longline gear retrieval and deployment. The objective of this measure is for NMFS to use the recorded data in an auditing capacity to verify the accuracy of information reported by the vessel owner/operator (e.g., logbook, VMS), as well as in observer reports. Secondly, the electronic monitoring would enable the collection of video image and fishing effort data that may be used in conjunction with other sources of information to estimate bluefin tuna dead discards. Lastly, electronic monitoring would augment the ability of an observer to fulfill their duties by providing a record of catch during the time periods the observer may be unable to observe the catch directly.

Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PL 104-13) and the Privacy Act of 1974 (PL 93-579), collection and disclosure of the video monitoring data to NMFS would be mandatory for the purpose of managing the Atlantic Pelagic Longline fishery. Reporting burden for the collection of this information is estimated to average 2 hours per trip, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining data needed, and completing and reviewing the information. The data provided to NMFS would be treated confidentially in accordance with NOAA Administrative Order 216-100. It is the policy of NMFS not to release confidential data, other than in aggregate form, as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act protects the confidentiality of those submitting data. Whenever data are requested, NMFS ensures that information identifying the pecuniary business activity of a particular individual is not identified. This electronic monitoring information collection has been issued a valid OMB control number (0648-0372), and is subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act and penalties associated with non-compliance. Any comments regarding this burden estimate or suggestions for reducing this burden may

be sent to NMFS, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

The comment period for the proposed rule closed on January 10, 2014, and NMFS is currently reviewing public comments and deliberating on management measures to include in the final rule. Please consult our website for information regarding availability of the final rule, likely later this year (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>).

Sincerely,

Margo Schulze-Haugen
Chief
Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division