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## Title 50 –Wildlife and Fisheries

### Chapter III –International Fishing and Related Activities

#### Part 300 –International Fisheries Regulations

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 951 *et seq.*, 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, 16 U.S.C. 5501 *et seq.*, 16 U.S.C. 2431 *et seq.*, 31 U.S.C. 9701 *et seq.*

**Source:** 61 FR 35550, July 5, 1996, unless otherwise noted.

#### Subpart C Eastern Pacific Tuna Fisheries

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**Editorial Note:** Nomenclature changes to part 300 appear at 64 FR 44431, Aug. 16, 1999, and at 76 FR 59305, Sept. 26, 2011.

#### Subpart C—Eastern Pacific Tuna Fisheries

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 951 *et seq.*

#### § 300.20 Purpose and scope.

- (a) The regulations in this subpart are issued under the authority of the Tuna Conventions Act of 1950, as amended (Act), and apply to persons and vessels subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. The regulations implement recommendations and other decisions of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) for the conservation and management of stocks of tunas and tuna-like species and other species of fish taken by vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species in the IATTC Convention Area. The Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Secretary of State and, with respect to enforcement measures, the U.S. Coast Guard, may promulgate such regulations as may be necessary to carry out the U.S. international obligations under the Convention for the Establishment of an Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (Convention), the Convention for the Strengthening of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission Established by the 1949 Convention between the United States of America and the Republic of Costa Rica (Antigua Convention), and the Act, including recommendations and other decisions adopted by the IATTC.

(b) This subpart does not apply to:

- (1) Any person or vessel authorized by the IATTC, the Assistant Administrator, or any state of the United States to engage in fishing for research purposes; or
- (2) Any person or vessel engaged in sport fishing for personal use.

[87 FR 40735, July 8, 2022]

## § 300.21 Definitions.

In addition to the terms defined in § 300.2, in the Act, the Convention for the Establishment of an Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (Convention), and the Convention for the Strengthening of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission Established by the 1949 Convention between the United States of America and the Republic of Costa Rica (Antigua Convention), the terms used in this subpart have the following meanings. If a term is defined differently in § 300.2, in the Act, or in the Antigua Convention, the definition in this section shall apply.

**Activation of a satellite buoy** means the act of initializing network service for receiving the satellite buoy's position. Activation is done by the buoy supplier company at the request of the vessel owner or manager. Following activation, the vessel owner pays for the communication service. The buoy can be transmitting or not, depending if it has been switched on.

**Active FAD** means a FAD deployed at sea where activation of the satellite buoy has occurred and the satellite buoy is transmitting its location and is being tracked by the vessel owner or operator. A FAD shall be considered an Active FAD unless/until the vessel owner or operator is no longer tracking its location and the vessel owner or operator notifies the IATTC that the FAD is deactivated.

**Biodegradable** means non-synthetic materials and/or bio-based alternatives that are consistent with approved international standards for materials that are biodegradable in marine environments. The components resulting from the degradation of these materials should not be damaging to the marine and coastal ecosystems or include heavy metals or plastics in their composition. Examples of non-synthetic materials include plant-based materials such as cotton, jute, manila hemp (abaca), bamboo, and natural rubber; and animal-based materials such as leather, wool, and lard. The approved international standards are ASTM D6691, ASTM D7881, and TUV Austria.

**Commercial** with respect to commercial fishing, means fishing in which the fish harvested, either in whole or in part, are intended to enter commerce through sale, barter or trade.

**Commercial passenger fishing vessel** means any vessel licensed for commercial passenger fishing purposes within the State out of which it is operating and from which, while under charter or hire, persons are legally permitted to conduct sportfishing activities.

**Convention Area or IATTC Convention Area** means all waters of the Pacific Ocean within the area bounded by the west coast of the Americas and by 50° N latitude from the coast of North America to its intersection with 150° W longitude, then 150° W longitude to its intersection with 50° S latitude, and then 50° S latitude to its intersection with the coast of South America.

**Data buoy** means, for the purpose of § 300.25, a floating device, either drifting or anchored, which is deployed by one or more governmental or recognized scientific organizations or entities for the purpose of electronically collecting and measuring environmental data, and not for the purpose of fishing activities, and which has been reported to the IATTC by a Member or Cooperating non-Member of the Commission.

**Deactivation of a satellite buoy** means the act of canceling network service for receiving the satellite buoy's position. Deactivation is done by the buoy supplier company at the request of the vessel owner or manager. Following deactivation, the communication service is no longer paid for and the buoy stops transmitting.

**Dolphin set** means a purse seine set where a class size 6 U.S. purse seine vessel (greater than 363 metric tons carrying capacity) deploys a net on, or encircles, dolphins to catch yellowfin tuna.

**Fish aggregating device (FAD)** means anchored, drifting, floating or submerged objects deployed and/or tracked by vessels, including through the use of radio and/or satellite buoys, for the purpose of aggregating target tuna species for purse-seine fishing operations.

**Fishing trip** means a period that a fishing vessel spends at sea between port visits and during which any fishing occurs.

**Fishing vessel** means any vessel, boat, ship, or other craft that is used for, equipped to be used for, or of a type that is normally used for fishing or for assisting or supporting a vessel engaged in fishing, except purse seine skiffs.

**Floating object** means any natural object or FAD around which fishing vessels may catch tuna.

**Floating object set** means a purse seine set in which purse seine gear is deployed to encircle a floating object.

**Force majeure** means, for the purpose of § 300.25, a situation in which a vessel at sea, except while transiting between ports on a trip during which no fishing operations occur, is disabled by mechanical and/or structural failure, fire or explosion.

**Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Branch** means the Chief of the HMS Branch of the Sustainable Fisheries Division, National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region, Suite 4200, 501 W Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90802, and [wcr.hms@noaa.gov](mailto:wcr.hms@noaa.gov).

**Incidental catch or incidental species** means species caught while fishing with the primary purpose of catching a different species. An incidental catch is expressed as a percentage of the weight of the total fish on board.

**Land or Landing** means to begin transfer of fish from a fishing vessel. Once transfer begins, all fish on board the vessel are counted as part of the landing.

**Longline gear** means a type of fishing gear consisting of a main line that exceeds 1 nautical mile in length, is suspended horizontally in the water column anchored, floating, or attached to a vessel, and from which branch or dropper lines with hooks are attached.

**Mesh size** means the distance between the inside of one knot to the inside of the opposing knot when the mesh is stretched, regardless of twine size.

**Mobulid ray** means any animal in the family Mobulidae, which includes manta rays (*Manta spp.*) and devil rays (*Mobula spp.*).

**Non-entangling FAD** means a FAD that does not include any netting materials for any part of the FAD including both the surface structure (e.g., raft) and subsurface structure (e.g., tail).

**Observer** means an individual placed aboard a fishing vessel under the IATTC observer program or any other international observer program in which the United States may participate.

**Overall length** means registered length, or the horizontal distance between the outboard side of the foremost part of the stem and the outboard side of the aftermost part of the stern, excluding rudders, outboard motor brackets, and other similar fittings and attachments for a single-hull vessel; for a multi-hull vessel, it is the horizontal distance between the outboard side of the foremost part of the stem of the foremost hull and the outboard side of the aftermost part of the stern of the aftermost hull, excluding fittings or attachments (See 46 CFR 69.203).

**Reactivation of a satellite buoy** means the act of re-initializing network service for transmission of a satellite buoy's position after deactivation. The procedure is the same as the one to be followed for activation of a satellite buoy.

**Regional Administrator** means the Regional Administrator for the West Coast Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, or a designee.

**Regional Vessel Register (hereafter referred to as Vessel Register)** means the regional register of vessels authorized to fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the Convention Area, as established by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission in June 2000.

**Satellite buoy** means a buoy that uses a satellite network service to indicate its geographical position and is compliant with requirements in § 300.28(a) to be clearly marked with a unique identification code.

**Shark line** means a type of fishing gear used to target sharks and consisting of an individual hooked line or hooked lines attached to the floatline or directly to the floats of longline gear and deployed in the water column at depths shallower than the mainline.

**Signal loss** means the situation in which, without any intervention of the owner, operator, or manager, a satellite buoy cannot be located by the owner on a monitoring device. The main causes of signal loss are buoy retrieved by another vessel or person (at-sea or on-shore), FAD sinking, and buoy failure.

**South Pacific Tuna Treaty** means the Treaty on Fisheries Between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America (50 CFR part 300, subpart D).

**Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD)** means the Assistant Regional Administrator for the Sustainable Fisheries Division, West Coast Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, or a designee.

**Tender vessel** means a vessel that does not engage in purse seine fishing but tends to FADs in support of tuna fishing operations.

**Transship** means to unload fish from a vessel that caught fish to another vessel.

**Transshipment receiving vessel** means any vessel, boat, ship, or other craft that is used to receive fish from a fishing vessel.

**Trip limit** means the total allowable amount of a species by weight of fish that may be retained on board, transshipped, or landed from a single fishing trip by a vessel that harvests tuna or tuna-like species.

**Tropical tuna** means any of the following species:

Common name	Scientific name
Bigeye tuna	<i>Thunnus obesus</i> .

Common name	Scientific name
Skipjack tuna	<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i> .
Yellowfin tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i> .

**Tuna** means any fish of the genus *Thunnus* and the species *Katsuwonus pelamis*.

**Vessel monitoring system (VMS)** means an automated, remote system that provides information about a vessel's identity, location and activity, for the purposes of routine monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement of area and time restrictions and other fishery management measures.

**VMS unit**, sometimes known as a “mobile transmitting unit,” means a transceiver or communications device, including all hardware and software that is carried and operated on a vessel as part of a VMS.

[61 FR 35550, July 5, 1996]

**Editorial Note:** For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 300.21, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and at [www.govinfo.gov](http://www.govinfo.gov).

## § 300.22 Recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

### (a) Logbooks –

- (1) **General logbook reporting.** The master or other person in charge of a commercial fishing vessel or commercial passenger fishing vessel (CPFV) authorized to fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the Convention Area, or a person authorized in writing to serve as the agent for either person, must keep an accurate log of operations conducted from the fishing vessel.
- (2) **Longline and other non-purse seine logbooks.** Maintaining and submitting any logbook required by existing state or Federal regulation will be sufficient to comply with paragraph (a)(1) of this section.
- (3) **Purse seine logbooks.** For purse seine vessels greater than 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity that are authorized to purse seine for tuna in the Convention Area, the log must include for each day the date, noon position (stated in latitude and longitude or in relation to known physical features), and the tonnage of fish on board, by species. The record and bridge log maintained and submitted at the request of the IATTC will be sufficient to comply with this paragraph (a)(3) and with paragraph (a)(1) of this section, provided the items of information specified by the IATTC are accurately entered in the log. For purse seine vessels of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity or less, maintaining and submitting any logbook required by existing state or Federal regulation will be sufficient to comply with paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

- (b) **Whale shark encirclement reporting.** The owner and operator of a purse seine fishing vessel of the United States that encircles a whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) while commercially fishing in the Convention Area must ensure that the incident is recorded on the log that is required by paragraphs (a)(1) and (3) of this section. The log must include the following information: The number of individual whale sharks with

which the vessel interacted, details of how and why the encirclement happened, where it occurred, steps taken to ensure safe release, and an assessment of the life status of the whale shark upon release (including whether the animal was released alive, but subsequently died), as may be further specified by NMFS.

(c) **FAD reporting** –

- (1) **Reporting on FAD interactions.** U.S. purse seine vessel operators must provide the observer with the FAD identification code and, as appropriate, the other information in the FAD interaction standard format provided by the HMS Branch. U.S. vessel owners and operators, without an observer onboard, must ensure that any interaction or activity with a FAD is reported using a FAD interaction standard format provided by the HMS Branch. The owner and operator shall ensure that the form is submitted within 30 days of each landing or transshipment of tuna or tuna-like species to the address specified by the HMS Branch.
- (2) **Reporting on Active FADs.** U.S. vessel owners and operators must record or maintain daily information on buoy location and acoustic data for all Active FADs that have been deployed in the water in the IATTC Convention Area and report that information to the IATTC, using a format and address provided by the HMS Branch. Daily information on buoy location must include date, time, buoy identifier, latitude, longitude, IMO number, and speed. Daily acoustic data will vary depending on the buoy company, but must include company, buoy identifier, latitude, longitude, date, time, and available layers of data. Further instructions on reporting data specific for different buoy companies are available in a compliance guide. This information must be submitted for each calendar month no later than 90 days after the month covered by the report.
- (3) **Deactivation of Active FADs.** U.S. vessel owners and operators must report any deactivation of a satellite buoy, including the reason for deactivation, date, latitude, longitude, buoy identifier, and speed. This information must be reported to the IATTC, using a format and address provided by the HMS Branch. This information must be submitted for each calendar month no later than 90 days after the month covered by the report.
- (4) **Reactivation of Active FADs.** U.S. vessel owners and operators must report any remote reactivation of a satellite buoy, including the reason for remote reactivation, date, latitude, longitude, buoy identifier, speed. This information must be reported to the IATTC, using a format and address provided by the HMS Branch. This information must be submitted for each calendar month no later than 90 days after the month covered by the report.
- (5) **Reporting on recovered FADs.** U.S. vessel owners and operators must report information on FADs that are recovered for disposal or recycling to the IATTC, unless that information is already reported to the IATTC by an observer. This information must be reported using a format and address provided by the HMS Branch. The owner and operator must ensure that the form is submitted within 30 days of each recovery to the address specified by the HMS Branch.

- (d) **Cannery reporting.** U.S. vessel owners and operators must report processing plant data for fish caught in the IATTC Convention Area to the IATTC, and also make the data available to NMFS upon request, no later than 10 days after completion of unloading and the last day of grading by size. Instructions for reporting are available in a compliance guide.

[87 FR 40736, July 8, 2022, as amended at 89 FR 96909, Dec. 6, 2024]

### § 300.23 IATTC Regional Vessel Register.

- (a) ***IATTC Regional Vessel Register (Vessel Register)***. The Vessel Register shall include, consistent with resolutions of the IATTC, all commercial fishing vessels and CPFVs authorized to fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the Convention Area. Except as provided under paragraph (a)(1) of this section, tuna purse seine vessels must be listed on the Vessel Register and categorized as active under paragraph (c)(2) of this section in order to fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the Convention Area.
- (1) ***Exception from requirement for inclusion on the Vessel Register***. Once per year, a vessel that is permitted and authorized under an alternative international tuna purse seine fisheries management regime in the Pacific Ocean may exercise an option to fish with purse seine gear to target tuna in the Convention Area without the vessel's capacity counted towards the cumulative carrying capacity described under paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section. This exception is for a single fishing trip that does not exceed 90 days in duration. At any time during the calendar year, a vessel exercising this exception shall follow the procedures, where applicable, described in paragraph (c) of this section. No more than 32 of such trips are allowed each calendar year. After the commencement of the 32nd such trip, the Regional Administrator shall announce, in the FEDERAL REGISTER and by other appropriate means, that no more such trips are allowed for the remainder of the calendar year. Under 50 CFR 216.24(b)(6)(iii)(C), vessel assessment fees must be paid for vessels exercising this option.
- (2) ***Requirements for inclusion of purse seine vessels on the Vessel Register***. Inclusion on the tuna purse seine portion of the Vessel Register is valid through December 31 of each year. New tuna purse seine vessels may be added to the Vessel Register at any time to replace those previously removed by the Regional Administrator, provided that the total capacity of the replacement vessel or vessels does not exceed that of the tuna purse seine vessel or vessels being replaced.
- (b) ***Vessel information to be collected for the Vessel Register*** –
- (1) ***Required information***. Information on each commercial fishing vessel or CPFV authorized to use purse seine, longline, drift gillnet, harpoon, troll, rod and reel, or pole and line fishing gear to fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the Convention Area for sale shall be collected by the Regional Administrator to conform to IATTC resolutions governing the Vessel Register. This information initially includes, but is not limited to, the vessel name and registration number; the name and business address of the owner(s) and managing owner(s); a photograph of the vessel with the registration number legible; previous vessel name(s) and previous flag (if known and if any); port of registry; International Radio Call Sign; IMO number (if applicable); vessel length, beam, and moulded depth; gross tonnage, fish hold capacity in cubic meters, and carrying capacity in metric tons and cubic meters; engine horsepower; date and place where built; and type of fishing method or methods used. The required information shall be collected as part of existing information collections as described in this part and other parts of the CFR.
- (2) ***IMO numbers***. For the purpose of this section, an “IMO number” is the unique six or seven digit number issued for a vessel under the ship identification number scheme adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and managed by the entity identified by the IMO (currently IHS Maritime) and is also known as a Lloyd's Register number.
- (3) ***Requirements for IMO numbers***. The owner of a fishing vessel of the United States used for commercial fishing for tuna and tuna-like species in the IATTC Convention Area shall ensure that an IMO number has been issued for the vessel if the vessel's Certificate of Documentation issued under 46 CFR part 67 indicates that the vessel's total internal volume is 100 gross register tons or greater or 100 gross tonnage or greater. In addition, the owner of a fishing vessel of the United States

engaging in fishing activities for tuna or tuna-like species in the IATTC Convention Area, and for which a high seas fishing permit under § 300.333 is required, shall ensure that an IMO number has been issued for the vessel if the vessel's total internal volume is less than 100 gross registered tons or less than 100 gross tons, but equal to or greater than 12 meters in overall length, as indicated in the vessel's Certificate of Documentation issued under 46 CFR part 67 or State documentation. A vessel owner may request that an IMO number be issued for a vessel by following the instructions given by the administrator of the IMO ship identification number scheme; those instructions are currently available on the website of IHS Markit, <https://imonumbers.lrfairplay.com/>.

(4) **Request for exemption.** In the event that a fishing vessel owner, after following the instructions given by the designated manager of the IMO ship identification number scheme, is unable to ensure that an IMO number is issued for the fishing vessel, the fishing vessel owner may request an exemption from the requirement from the Regional Administrator. The request must be sent by mail to NMFS HMS Branch, West Coast Region, 501 W Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802, or by email to [wcr.hms@noaa.gov](mailto:wcr.hms@noaa.gov), and must include the vessel's name, the vessel's official number, a description of the steps taken to request an IMO number, and a description of any responses from the administrator of the IMO ship identification number scheme.

(5) **Exemption process.** Upon receipt of a request for an exemption under paragraph (b)(4) of this section, the Regional Administrator will, to the extent they determine appropriate, assist the fishing vessel owner in requesting an IMO number. If the Regional Administrator determines that the fishing vessel owner has followed all appropriate procedures and yet is unable to obtain an IMO number for the fishing vessel, they will issue an exemption from the requirements of paragraph (b)(3) of this section for the vessel and its owner and notify the owner of the exemption. The Regional Administrator may limit the duration of the exemption. The Regional Administrator may rescind an exemption at any time. If an exemption is rescinded, the fishing vessel owner must comply with the requirements of paragraph (b)(3) within 30 days of being notified of the rescission. If the ownership of a fishing vessel changes, an exemption issued to the former fishing vessel owner becomes void.

(c) **Purse seine Vessel Register listing.** For a tuna purse seine vessel to be listed on the Vessel Register and to be categorized as either "active" or "inactive" in the following calendar year, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the Regional Administrator the required permit applications, written notifications, and fees as described under 50 CFR 216.24(b) and under paragraphs (c)(2) and (3) of this section as well as payment of the vessel assessment fee, where applicable, to the IATTC.

(1) **Restrictions for purse seine vessels.** The following restrictions apply:

(i) The cumulative carrying capacity of all tuna purse seine vessels on the Vessel Register may not exceed 31,866 cubic meters in a given year; and

(ii) A purse seine vessel in excess of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity may not be added to active status on the Vessel Register unless the captain of the vessel has obtained a valid operator permit under 50 CFR 216.24(b)(2).

(2) **Active status for purse seine vessels.** As early as August 1 of each year, vessel owners or managing owners may request that a purse seine vessel qualified to be listed on the Vessel Register under paragraph (a)(2) of this section be categorized as active for the following calendar year. To request a purse seine vessel in excess of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity be listed on the Vessel Register and be categorized as active, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the Regional Administrator the vessel permit application and payment of the permit application fee and submit to the IATTC payment of the vessel assessment fee.

- (i) To request a purse seine vessel of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity or less be listed on the Vessel Register and be categorized as active, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the HMS Branch written notification including, but not limited to, a vessel photograph, the vessel information as described under paragraph (b) of this section, and the owner or managing owner's signature, business email address, and business telephone and fax numbers. If a purse seine vessel of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity or less is required by the Agreement on the IDCP to carry an observer, the vessel owner or managing owner must also submit payment of the vessel assessment fee to the IATTC.
- (ii) The Regional Administrator must receive the vessel permit application or written notification and payment of the permit application fee and payment confirmation of the vessel assessment fee no later than September 15 for vessels for which a DML was requested for the following year and no later than November 30 for vessels for which a DML was not requested for the following year. Submission of the vessel permit application or written notification and payment of the vessel assessment fee and permit application fee will be interpreted by the Regional Administrator as a request for a vessel to be categorized as active.

**(3) *Inactive status for purse seine vessels.***

- (i) From August 1 through November 30 of each year, vessel owners or managing owners may request that purse seine vessels qualified to be listed on the Vessel Register under paragraph (a)(2) of this section be categorized as inactive for the following calendar year. To request a purse seine vessel in excess of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity be listed on the Vessel Register and categorized as inactive for the following calendar year, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the IATTC payment of the associated vessel assessment fee. Payment of the vessel assessment fee consistent with inactive status will be interpreted by the Regional Administrator as a request for the vessel to be categorized as inactive.
- (ii) To request a tuna purse seine vessel of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity or less be listed on the Vessel Register and categorized as inactive for the following calendar year, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the HMS Branch a written notification including, but not limited to, the vessel name and registration number and the vessel owner or managing owner's name, signature, business address, business email address, and business telephone and fax numbers. Payment of the vessel assessment fee is not required for vessels of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity or less to be categorized as inactive.
- (iii) At any time during the year, a vessel owner or managing owner may request that a tuna purse seine vessel qualified to be listed on the Vessel Register under paragraph (a)(2) of this section be categorized as inactive for the remainder of the calendar year, provided the cumulative carrying capacity described in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section is not exceeded. To request a purse seine vessel in excess of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity be listed on the Vessel Register and categorized as inactive for the remainder of the calendar year, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the IATTC payment of the associated vessel assessment fee. To request a tuna purse seine vessel of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity or less be listed on the Vessel Register and categorized as inactive for the remainder of the calendar year, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the HMS Branch written notification as described in paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section. Payment of the vessel assessment fee is not required for such vessels.

- (iv) The vessel owner or managing owner of a purse seine vessel listed as active on the Vessel Register that has sunk may request the vessel be listed as sunk and categorized as inactive on the Vessel Register. To request the vessel be listed as sunk and categorized as inactive on the Vessel Register, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the HMS Branch written notification within 30 days of the vessel's sinking. Written notification shall include, but is not limited to, the vessel name, date of sinking, registration number, the vessel owner or managing owner's name, signature, business address, business email address, and business telephone and fax numbers. For subsequent calendar years, vessel assessment fee payment shall be made as described in paragraph (c)(3) of this section.
- (v) A vessel listed as inactive or sunk on the Vessel Register for more than two consecutive calendar years after January 21, 2020, requesting active status will be prioritized according to the hierarchy under paragraph (e) of this section. A vessel listed as inactive or sunk on the Vessel Register for more than two consecutive calendar years after January 21, 2020, will be removed from the Vessel Register as described in paragraph (f)(9) of this section.

(d) ***Frivolous requests for purse seine vessels on the Vessel Register.***

- (1) Except as described under paragraph (d)(2) of this section, requests for active status under paragraph (c)(2) of this section will be considered frivolous if, for a vessel categorized as active on the Vessel Register in a given calendar year:
  - (i) Less than 20 percent of the vessel's total landings, by weight, in that same year is comprised of tuna harvested by purse seine in the Convention Area; or
  - (ii) The vessel did not fish for tuna at all in the Convention Area in that same year.
- (2) Requests described under paragraph (d)(1) of this section will not be considered frivolous requests if:
  - (i) The vessel's catch pattern fell within the criteria described in paragraph (d)(1) of this section as a result of *force majeure* or other extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Regional Administrator; or
  - (ii) The vessel's carrying capacity is 400 st (362.8 mt) or less and there was at least one documented landing of tuna caught by the vessel in the Convention Area in the calendar year prior to the year in which the request is made and through November 15 of the year of the request, unless the vessel was not able to make a landing as a result of *force majeure* or other extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Regional Administrator.
  - (iii) The vessel was listed as inactive before January 21, 2020, and has not been listed as inactive for more than two consecutive calendar years since January 21, 2020.

(e) ***Listing hierarchy for purse seine vessels on the Vessel Register.*** Requests for active status and inactive status will be prioritized according to the following hierarchy:

- (1) Requests received for replacement vessels with a carrying capacity equal to or less than a vessel removed from the Vessel Register under a request described in paragraph (j) of this section;
- (2) Requests received for vessels that were categorized as active in the previous year, unless the request was determined to be frivolous by the Regional Administrator under paragraph (c)(2) of this section;

- (3) Requests received for vessels that were categorized as inactive under paragraph (c)(3) of this section in the previous year, unless that vessel has been listed as inactive or sunk under paragraph (c)(3) for more than 2 consecutive calendar years after January 21, 2020;
  - (4) Requests for vessels not described in paragraphs (e)(1) through (3) of this section, and requests, if applicable, by replacement vessels for the portion of the carrying capacity greater than the amount authorized to the vessel that was replaced under paragraph (j) of this section, will be prioritized on a first-come, first-served basis according to the date and time of receipt, provided that the associated vessel assessment fee is paid by the applicable deadline described in 50 CFR 216.24(b)(6)(iii); and
  - (5) Requests received from owners or managing owners of vessels that were determined by the Regional Administrator to have made a frivolous request for active status under paragraph (d) of this section or that have been listed as inactive or sunk as described in paragraph (c)(3) of this section for more than two consecutive calendar years after January 21, 2020.
- (f) **Removal from the Vessel Register.** A vessel may be removed from the Vessel Register by the Regional Administrator under any of the following circumstances:
- (1) The vessel has sunk and the vessel owner or managing owner has not submitted written notification as described in paragraph (c)(3)(iv) of this section.
  - (2) By written request of the vessel's owner or managing owner.
  - (3) Following a final agency action on a permit sanction for a violation.
  - (4) For failure to pay a penalty or for default on a penalty payment agreement resulting from a final agency action for a violation.
  - (5) The U.S. Maritime Administration or the U.S. Coast Guard notifies NMFS that:
    - (i) The owner has submitted an application for transfer of the vessel to foreign registry and flag; or
    - (ii) The documentation for the vessel has been or will be deleted for any reason.
  - (6) The vessel does not have a valid state registration or U.S. Coast Guard certificate of documentation.
  - (7) For tuna purse seine vessels, by written notification from the owner or managing owner of the intent to transfer the vessel to foreign registry and flag, as described in paragraph (i) of this section.
  - (8) For tuna purse seine vessels, the request for active status on the Vessel Register has been determined to be a frivolous request.
  - (9) For tuna purse seine vessels, the vessel has been listed as inactive or sunk on the Vessel Register for more than two consecutive calendar years after January 21, 2020.
- (g) **Process for removal from the Vessel Register.** When a vessel is removed from the Vessel Register under paragraph (f) of this section, the Regional Administrator shall promptly notify the vessel owner in writing of the removal and the reasons therefore. For a removal from the Vessel Register under § 300.30(f)(3), the Regional Administrator will not accept a request to reinstate the vessel to the Vessel Register for the term of the permit sanction. For a removal from the Vessel Register under § 300.30(f)(4), the Regional Administrator will not accept a request to reinstate the vessel to the Vessel Register until such time as payment is made on the penalty or penalty agreement, or such other duration as NOAA and the vessel owner may agree upon.
- (h) **Procedures for replacing purse seine vessels removed from the Vessel Register.**

- (1) A purse seine vessel that was previously listed on the Vessel Register, but not included for a given year or years, may be added back to the Vessel Register and categorized as inactive at any time during the year, provided the cumulative carrying capacity described in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section is not exceeded. The owner or managing owner of a purse seine vessel of more than 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity must pay the vessel assessment fee associated with inactive status. The owner or managing owner of a purse seine vessel of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity or less must submit written notification as described in paragraph (c)(3) of this section.
- (2) A purse seine vessel may be added to the Vessel Register and categorized as active in order to replace a vessel or vessels removed from active or inactive status under paragraph (f) of this section, provided the total carrying capacity described in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section is not exceeded and the owner submits a complete request under paragraph (h)(4) of this section.
- (3) Notification of available capacity after a purse seine vessel has been removed from the Vessel Register will be conducted as follows:
  - (i) After a purse seine vessel categorized as active or inactive is removed from the Vessel Register, the Regional Administrator will notify owners or managing owners of vessels eligible for, but not included on, the Vessel Register that replacement capacity is available on the active or inactive list of the Vessel Register.
  - (ii) When a purse seine vessel categorized as active or inactive on the Vessel Register has been removed from the Vessel Register under the procedures described in paragraph (j) of this section, the Regional Administrator will not make available the capacity of the vessel removed from the Vessel Register, and will reserve that capacity for a replacement vessel for a period of 2 years from the date of notification described in paragraph (j)(4) of this section. The replacement vessel will be eligible to be listed as active on the Vessel Register at the same carrying capacity or less as that of the vessel it is replacing. If the replacement vessel has a carrying capacity greater than the vessel being replaced, the vessel owner or managing owner may request additional carrying capacity allocated to the vessel in accordance with paragraph (e)(4) of this section. If additional carrying capacity is not available, the replacement vessel must reduce its carrying capacity to no more than the previously authorized carrying capacity amount for the vessel being replaced by complying with the protocol for sealing wells adopted by the IATTC, prior to it being listed as active on the Vessel Register. Such a vessel may apply for additional carrying capacity as it becomes available under the procedures described in paragraph (e)(4).
- (4) Vessel owners or managing owners may request a purse seine vessel of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity or less be categorized as active to replace a vessel or vessels removed from the Vessel Register by submitting to the HMS Branch written notification as described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section and, only if the vessel is required by the Agreement on the IDCP to carry an observer, payment of the vessel assessment fee to the IATTC within 10 business days after submission of the written notification. The replacement vessel will be eligible to be categorized as active on the Vessel Register at the same carrying capacity or less as that of the vessel or vessels it is replacing. If the replacement vessel has a carrying capacity greater than the vessel being replaced, the vessel owner or managing owner may request additional carrying capacity allocated to the vessel in accordance with paragraph (e)(4) of this section. If additional carrying capacity is not available, the replacement vessel must reduce its capacity to no more than the previously authorized carrying capacity for the vessel or vessels being replaced by complying with the protocol for sealing wells adopted by the IATTC, prior to it being listed as active on the Vessel Register. Such a vessel may apply for additional

carrying capacity as it becomes available. Payments received will be subject to a 10 percent surcharge for vessels that were listed as active on the Vessel Register in the previous calendar year, but not listed as inactive at the beginning of the calendar year for which active status was requested.

(5) Vessel owners or managing owners may request a purse seine vessel in excess of 400 st (362.8 mt) carrying capacity be categorized as active to replace a vessel or vessels removed from the Vessel Register by submitting to the Regional Administrator the vessel permit application as described under 50 CFR 216.24(b) and payment of the vessel assessment fee to the IATTC and payment of the permit application fee to the Regional Administrator within 10 business days after submission of the vessel permit application for the replacement vessel. The replacement vessel will be eligible to be categorized as active on the Vessel Register at the same carrying capacity as that of the vessel or vessels it is replacing. If the replacement vessel has a carrying capacity greater than the vessel being replaced, the vessel owner or managing owner may request additional carrying capacity allocated to the vessel in accordance with paragraph (e)(4) of this section. If additional carrying capacity is not available, the replacement vessel must reduce its carrying capacity to no more than the previously authorized carrying capacity for the vessel or vessels being replaced by complying with the protocol for sealing wells adopted by the IATTC, prior to it being listed as active on the Vessel Register. Such a vessel may apply for additional carrying capacity as it becomes available. The replacement vessel will also only be eligible to be categorized as active on the Vessel Register if the captain of the replacement vessel possesses an operator permit under 50 CFR 216.24(b). Payments received will be subject to a 10 percent surcharge for vessels that were listed as active on the Vessel Register in the previous calendar year, but not listed as inactive at the beginning of the calendar year for which active status was requested.

(6) The Regional Administrator will forward requests to replace vessels removed from the Vessel Register within 15 days of receiving each request.

(i) ***Transfers of purse seine vessels to a foreign registry and flag.*** The owner or managing owner of a purse seine vessel listed on the Vessel Register must provide written notification to the Regional Administrator prior to submitting an application for transfer of the vessel to foreign registry and flag. Written notification must be submitted to the Regional Administrator at least 10 business days prior to submission of the application for transfer. The written notification must include the vessel name and registration number; the expected date that the application for transfer will be submitted; and the vessel owner or managing owner's name and signature. Vessels that require approval by the U.S. Maritime Administration prior to transfer of the vessel to foreign registry and flag will not be subject to the notification requirement described in this paragraph (i).

(j) ***Aging fleet provision for purse seine vessels.***

(1) The vessel owner or managing owner of a purse seine vessel listed as active or inactive on the Vessel Register may request to replace the current vessel with a new or used vessel without losing the vessel's placement in the hierarchy of requests for active status as described in paragraph (e) of this section. The replacement vessel will be eligible to be listed as active on the Vessel Register at the same carrying capacity or less as that of the vessel it is replacing. If the replacement vessel has a carrying capacity greater than the vessel being replaced, the vessel owner or managing owner may request additional carrying capacity be allocated to the vessel in accordance with paragraph (e)(4) of this section. If additional carrying capacity is not available at the time the request to be listed as active on the Vessel Register is received by the Regional Administrator, the replacement vessel must reduce its carrying capacity to no more than the previously authorized carrying capacity of the vessel being replaced by complying with the protocol for sealing wells adopted by the IATTC, prior to it

being listed as active on the Vessel Register. Such a vessel may apply for additional carrying capacity as it becomes available under the procedures described in paragraph (e)(4). This aging fleet provision may be used only once per vessel by the vessel owner or managing owner.

- (2) A request made under this provision may include a request to remove the vessel from the Vessel Register. The Regional Administrator will ensure the amount of carrying capacity equal to or less of the vessel being replaced will be available for the replacement vessel for up to 2 years from the date of notification described in paragraph (j)(4) of this section.
- (3) To request a vessel be replaced under this provision, the vessel owner or managing owner must submit to the HMS Branch written notification including, but not limited to, the vessel name and registration number, the vessel owner or managing owner's name, signature, business address, business email address, and business telephone and fax numbers, and the expected month and year the replacement vessel will be ready to fish in the Convention Area.
- (4) Within 30 days of receiving each request described in paragraph (j)(3) of this section, the Regional Administrator shall notify the vessel owner or managing owner in writing whether the request has been accepted or denied, and the reasons therefore.

[87 FR 40736, July 8, 2022]

### § 300.24 Prohibitions.

In addition to the prohibitions in § 300.4, it is unlawful for any person or vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to:

- (a) Land any species of tuna during the closed season for that species in excess of the amount allowed by the Regional Administrator.
- (b) [Reserved]
- (c) Use tender vessels in the Convention Area.
- (d) Transship purse seine-caught tuna at sea within the Convention Area.
- (e) Fail to retain any bigeye, skipjack, or yellowfin tuna caught by a fishing vessel of the United States of class size 4-6 using purse seine gear in the Convention Area as required under § 300.27(a).
- (f) When using purse seine gear to fish for tuna in the Convention Area, fail to release any fish species (excluding mobulid rays, tuna, tuna-like species, and those being retained for consumption aboard the vessel) as soon as practicable after being identified on board the vessel during the brailing operation as required in § 300.27(b).
- (g) [Reserved]
- (h) Fail to use the sea turtle handling, release, and resuscitation procedures in § 300.27(c).
- (i) Fail to report information when requested by the Regional Administrator under § 300.22.
- (j) Fail to provide written notification as described under § 300.22(b)(8) to the Regional Administrator at least 10 business days prior to submission of an application to transfer a purse seine vessel listed on the Vessel Register to foreign registry and flag, unless transfer of the vessel requires approval by the U.S. Maritime Administration.

- (k) Use a U.S. fishing vessel over 24 meters in length to retain on board, transship, or land bigeye tuna caught by longline gear in the Convention Area or to fish in contravention of § 300.25(a)(4)(i) or (ii).
- (l) Use a U.S. fishing vessel over 24 meters in overall length to fish with longline gear in the Pacific Ocean both inside and outside the Convention Area on the same fishing trip in contravention of § 300.25(a)(4)(iii).
- (m) Fail to stow gear as required in § 300.25(a)(4)(iv) or (e)(6).
- (n) Use a fishing vessel of class size 4-6 to fish with purse seine gear in the IATTC Convention Area in contravention of § 300.25(e).
- (o) Use a U.S. longline or purse seine fishing vessel used to fish for HMS within one nautical mile of an anchored data buoy while the fishing vessel is in the Convention Area in contravention of § 300.25(f)(1).
- (p) Use a U.S. fishing vessel used for fishing for HMS, or any gear, equipment, or watercraft deployed by such a fishing vessel, to interact with a data buoy in the Convention Area in contravention of § 300.25(f)(2).
- (q) Remove from the water a data buoy and place it on board or tow a data buoy with a U.S. fishing vessel used for fishing for HMS while the vessel is in the Convention Area without authorization by the owner of the data buoy or the owner's authorized representative in contravention of § 300.25(f)(3).
- (r) In the event of an entanglement of a data buoy with a U.S. fishing vessel, or its fishing gear, equipment, or associated watercraft, used for fishing for HMS in the Convention Area, fail to promptly remove the data buoy with as little damage to the data buoy and its mooring and anchor lines as possible, in contravention of § 300.25(f)(4).
- (s) Fail to take all reasonable measures to avoid fishing gear entanglement or interaction with drifting data buoys in contravention of § 300.25(f)(5).
- (t) Use a U.S. fishing vessel to fish for HMS in the Convention Area and retain on board, transship, land, store, sell, or offer for sale any part or whole carcass of an oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) or fail to release unharmed, to the extent practicable, all oceanic whitetip sharks when brought alongside the vessel in contravention of § 300.27(d).
- (u) Use a United States commercial fishing vessel in the Convention Area to target, retain on board, transship, or land Pacific bluefin tuna in contravention of § 300.25(g).
- (v) Fail to maintain, submit, or ensure submission of a log that includes all the information required in § 300.22(a).
- (w) Set or attempt to set a purse seine on or around a whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) in contravention of § 300.27(g).
- (x) Fail to release a whale shark encircled in a purse seine net of a fishing vessel as required in § 300.27(h).
- (y) Fail to install, activate, or operate a VMS unit as required in § 300.26(c).
- (z) In the event of VMS unit failure or interruption: fail to repair or replace a VMS unit; fail to notify the Assistant Director, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, Pacific Islands Division (or designee) and follow the instructions provided; fail to manually report as required in § 300.26(c)(4)(ii); or otherwise fail to act as provided in § 300.26(c)(4).

- (aa) Disable, destroy, damage or operate improperly a VMS unit installed under § 300.26, or attempt to do any of the same, or fail to ensure that its operation is not impeded or interfered with, as provided in § 300.26(e).
- (bb) Fail to make a VMS unit installed under § 300.26 or the position data obtained from it available for inspection, as provided in § 300.26 (f) and (g).
- (cc) To retain on board, transship, store, land, sell, or offer for sale any part or whole carcass of a mobulid ray, as described in § 300.27(i).
- (dd) Fail to handle or release a mobulid ray as required in § 300.27(j).
- (ee) Fail to ensure characters of a unique code are marked indelibly on a FAD deployed or modified on or after January 1, 2017, in accordance with § 300.28(a)(2).
- (ff) Fail to provide information to an observer or record or report data on FADs as required in § 300.22(c).
- (gg) Use a commercial purse seine or longline fishing vessel of the United States to retain on board, transship, store, or land any part or whole carcass of a silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) in contravention of § 300.27(e).
- (hh) Fail to follow observer safety requirements as specified under § 300.29.
- (ii) Fail to handle or release a shark as required in § 300.27(k).
- (jj) Use a shark line in contravention of § 300.27(l).
- (kk) When deploying a FAD, activate the satellite buoy attached to a FAD in a location other than on a purse seine vessel at sea as required in § 300.28(b).
- (ll) Fail to activate a satellite buoy before deploying a FAD at sea as required in § 300.28(b).
- (mm) Deploy a FAD in the IATTC Convention Area that is not an Active FAD.
- (nn) Have more Active FADs than specified in § 300.28(c) in the IATTC Convention Area at any one time.
- (oo) Deploy a FAD in the IATTC Convention Area during a period of 15 days prior to the start of the selected closure period in contravention of § 300.28(d)(1).
- (pp) Fail to timely remove from the water a number of FADs in the IATTC Convention Area equal to the number of FADs set upon by the vessel during the 15 days prior to the start of the selected closure period as required in § 300.28(d)(2).
- (qq) Deploy, or have onboard a vessel, a FAD in the IATTC Convention Area that fails to comply with the FAD design requirements in § 300.28(e).
- (rr) Except for tuna purse seine vessels, when recovering FADs, performing maintenance and adjustments on deployed FADs, or deploying a FAD.
- (ss) Deploy or redeploy a FAD in the IATTC Convention Area that fails to comply with the FAD design requirements in § 300.28(g) and (h).

[61 FR 35550, July 5, 1996]

**Editorial Note:** For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 300.24, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and at [www.govinfo.gov](http://www.govinfo.gov).

## § 300.25 Fisheries management.

### (a) Longline tuna catch limits.

- (1) Fishing seasons for all tuna species begin on 0000 hours Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) January 1 and end either on 2400 hours UTC December 31 or when NMFS closes the fishery for a specific species.
- (2) There is a limit of 750 metric tons of bigeye tuna that may be caught by longline gear in the Convention Area by U.S. commercial fishing vessels that are over 24 meters in overall length. The catch limit within a calendar year is subject to increase if the United States receives a transfer of catch limit from another IATTC member or cooperating non-member, per paragraph (a)(5) of this section.
- (3) NMFS will project a date the limit of bigeye tuna established under paragraph (a)(2) of this section will be reached (*i.e.*, a closure date) by monitoring longline landings, data submitted in logbooks, and other available information. NMFS will publish a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER at least 7 calendar days in advance of that projected closure date announcing that the limit has been reached. The FEDERAL REGISTER notice will specify that the restrictions described in paragraph (a)(4) of this section will be in effect through the end of the calendar year.
- (4) Once the closure date is announced, pursuant to paragraph (a)(3) of this section the following restrictions will apply during the period specified in the announcement:
  - (i) A fishing vessel of the United States over 24 meters in overall length may not be used to retain on board, transship, or land bigeye tuna captured by longline gear in the Convention Area, except as follows:
    - (A) Any bigeye tuna already on board a U.S. fishing vessel upon the effective closure date may be retained on board, transshipped, and/or landed, to the extent authorized by applicable laws and regulations, provided that the bigeye tuna is landed within 14 days after the effective closure date.
    - (B) The 14-day limit is waived in the case of a U.S. fishing vessel that has already declared to NMFS, pursuant to § 665.803(a) of this title, that the current trip type is shallow-setting. However, the number of bigeye tuna retained on board, transshipped, or landed must not exceed the number on board the vessel upon the effective closure date, as recorded by the NMFS observer on board the vessel.
  - (ii) Bigeye tuna caught by a vessel of the United States over 24 meters in overall length and using longline gear in the Convention Area may not be transshipped to a fishing vessel unless that fishing vessel is operated in compliance with a valid permit issued under § 660.707 or § 665.801 of this title.
  - (iii) A fishing vessel of the United States over 24 meters in overall length may not be used to fish in the Pacific Ocean using longline gear both inside and outside the Convention Area during the same fishing trip. The only exceptions are: a fishing trip during which the closure date was announced under paragraph (a)(3) of this section, and a trip for which a declaration has been made to NMFS, pursuant to § 665.803(a) of this title, that the current trip is shallow-setting.
  - (iv) If a fishing vessel of the United States over 24 meters in overall length is used to fish in the Pacific Ocean using longline gear outside the Convention Area and the vessel enters the Convention Area at any time during an effective closure period on the same fishing trip, the

longline gear on the fishing vessel must be stowed in a manner so as not to be readily available for fishing. Specifically, the hooks, branch or dropper lines, and floats used to buoy the mainline must be stowed and not available for immediate use, and any power-operated mainline hauler on deck must be covered in such a manner that it is not readily available for use. This provision does not apply to trips in which vessels have made a declaration to NMFS, pursuant to § 665.803(a) of this title, that the trip type is shallow-setting.

(5) If the United States engages in a transfer of a bigeye tuna catch limit with another IATTC member or cooperating non-member, NMFS will publish a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER announcing the new catch limit that is available to U.S. commercial fishing vessels that are over 24 meters in overall length. All restrictions described in paragraphs (a)(1) and (3) through (4) of this section will continue to apply.

(b) **Use of tender vessels.** No person subject to these regulations may use a tender vessel in the Convention Area.

(c) **Transshipments at sea.** No person subject to these regulations may transship purse seine-caught tuna from one vessel to another vessel at sea within the Convention Area.

(d) **Observer requirements –**

(1) **Purse seine vessels.**

(i) The holder of an eastern tropical Pacific Ocean vessel permit, as required by § 216.24(b) of this title, must allow an observer duly authorized by the Administrator, West Coast Region, to accompany the vessel on all fishing trips in the IATTC Convention Area for the purpose of conducting research and observing operations, including collecting information that may be used in civil or criminal penalty proceedings, forfeiture actions, or permit sanctions, pursuant to the requirements in § 216.24(e) of this title. A vessel that fails to carry an observer in accordance with these requirements may not engage in fishing operations unless an exemption has been granted from these requirements as provided for in § 216.24(e)(1)(i) of this title.

(ii) [Reserved]

(2) [Reserved]

(e) **Purse seine closures –**

(1) **72-day closure.** A U.S. commercial purse seine fishing vessel that is of class size 4-6 (more than 182 metric tons carrying capacity) may not be used to fish with purse seine gear in the Convention Area for 72 days during one of the following two periods:

(i) From 0000 hours Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) July 29 to 2400 hours UTC October 8; or

(ii) From 0000 hours UTC November 9 to 2400 hours UTC January 19 of the following year.

(2) **Additional closure days for vessels that exceed bigeye tuna catch levels.**

(i) U.S. purse seine vessels that exceed a certain annual catch level of bigeye tuna must increase the number of closure days they observe in the following year, as specified in table 1 to this paragraph (e)(2).

(ii) The additional days of closure must be added to one of the two closure periods indicated in paragraph (e)(1) of this section. For vessels observing the first closure period, the additional days must be added at the beginning of the closure period. For vessels observing the second

closure period, the additional days must be added to the end of the closure period. The HMS Branch will confirm the determination of annual catch levels for U.S. purse vessels based on information provided by the IATTC and notify any U.S. vessel that exceeds a given catch level.

**TABLE 1 TO PARAGRAPH (e)(2)**

Catch level (mt) exceeded	Additional closure days observed
1,200	10
1,500	13
1,800	16
2,100	19
2,400	22

- (3) **Choice of closure period.** A vessel owner, manager, or association representative of a vessel that is subject to the requirements of paragraph (e)(1) of this section must provide written notification to the Regional Administrator declaring which one of the two closure periods identified in paragraph (e)(1) their vessel will observe in that year. This written notification must be submitted by email to [wcr.hms@noaa.gov](mailto:wcr.hms@noaa.gov) and must be received no later than May 15 of the relevant calendar year. The written notification must include the vessel name and registration number, the closure dates that will be observed by that vessel, and the vessel owner or managing owner's name, signature, business address, and business telephone number.
- (4) **Default closure period.** If written notification is not submitted per paragraph (e)(3) of this section for a vessel subject to the requirements under paragraph (e)(1) of this section, that vessel must observe the second closure period under paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section.
- (5) **Request for exemption due to force majeure.** A vessel may request a reduced closure period if a *force majeure* event renders the vessel unable to proceed to sea outside one of the two closure periods specified in paragraph (e)(1) of this section for at least 75 continuous days. A vessel will only be eligible for an exemption due to *force majeure* if the vessel was disabled in the course of fishing operations by mechanical and/or structural failure, fire, or explosion.
  - (i) A request for an exemption due to *force majeure* must be made to the Highly Migratory Species Branch no later than 20 calendar days after the end of the period of inactivity due to *force majeure*. The request must be made via email to [wcr.hms@noaa.gov](mailto:wcr.hms@noaa.gov) or by contacting the HMS Branch. The request must include the name and official number of the vessel, vessel owner or manager's name and signature, and evidence to support the request, which may include but is not limited to photographs, repair bills, certificates of departure from port, and in the case of a marine casualty, a completed copy of the U.S. Coast Guard Form CG-2692A (See 46 CFR 4.05-10).

- (ii) If accepted by the Sustainable Fisheries Division, the request for exemption due to *force majeure* will be forwarded to the IATTC Director. If declined by the Sustainable Fisheries Division, the applicant may provide additional information or documentation to the Sustainable Fisheries Division with a request that the initial decision be reconsidered by email to [wcr.hms@noaa.gov](mailto:wcr.hms@noaa.gov), or by contacting the HMS Branch Chief.
- (iii) If the request for an exemption due to *force majeure* is accepted by the IATTC, the vessel may observe a reduced closure period of 40 consecutive days in the same year during which the *force majeure* event occurred, in one of the two closure periods described in paragraph (e)(1) of this section. After a request is accepted by the IATTC, the vessel owner or manager must specify to the HMS Branch which 40 consecutive days the vessel will observe for their reduced closure period.
- (iv) If the request for an exemption due to *force majeure* is accepted by the IATTC and the vessel has already observed a closure period described in paragraph (e)(1) of this section in the same year during which the *force majeure* event occurred, the vessel may observe a reduced closure period of 40 consecutive days the following year, in one of the two closure periods described in paragraph (e)(1).
- (v) An exemption due to *force majeure* will only apply to the 72-day closure period required under paragraph (e)(1) of this section. Vessels that are both granted a reduced 40-day initial closure period due to *force majeure* under this paragraph (e)(5) and required to observe additional closure days for exceeding bigeye tuna catch levels under paragraph (e)(2) of this section must observe the reduced closure period consecutively with the additional closure days by adding the additional closure days to either the beginning of the first reduced closure period or the end of the second reduced closure period.
- (vi) Any purse seine vessel for which a *force majeure* request is accepted by the IATTC must carry an observer aboard authorized pursuant to the International Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program, unless that vessel has been granted an exemption from the Regional Administrator.

(6) **31-day area closure.** A U.S. fishing vessel of class size 4-6 (more than 182 metric tons carrying capacity) may not be used from 0000 hours on October 9 to 2400 hours on November 8 to fish with purse seine gear within the area bounded at the east and west by 96° and 110° W longitude and bounded at the north and south by 4° N and 3° S latitude.

(7) **Requirement to stow gear.** At all times while a vessel is in a time/area closed period established under paragraph (e)(1) or (6) of this section, unless fishing under the exception under paragraph (e)(5) of this section, the fishing gear of the vessel must be stowed in a manner as not to be readily available for fishing. In particular, the boom must be lowered as far as possible so that the vessel cannot be used for fishing, but so that the skiff is accessible for use in emergency situations; the helicopter, if any, must be tied down; and launches must be secured.

(f) **Restrictions on fishing in proximity to data buoys.**

(1) A longline or purse seine fishing vessel of the United States may not be used to fish for HMS within one nautical mile of an anchored data buoy in the Convention Area. The one-nautical-mile distance shall be measured from the data buoy to the nearest portion of the fishing vessel or items associated with the fishing vessel, such as gear or watercraft deployed by the fishing vessel, to the

data buoy. This prohibition shall not apply if and when the fishing vessel is operated as part of a scientific research program that has received specific authorization by the IATTC or is conducting work on behalf of the IATTC.

- (2) A fishing vessel of the United States used to fish for HMS, or any fishing gear, equipment, or watercraft deployed by such a fishing vessel, may not be used to interact with a data buoy while the fishing vessel is in the Convention Area. Interact with a data buoy means to engage in conduct that could impair the functioning of a data buoy through actions that include but that are not limited to the following: encircling the buoy with fishing gear; tying up to or attaching the vessel, or any fishing gear, part or portion of the fishing vessel, including equipment such as watercraft, to a data buoy or its mooring; or cutting a data buoy anchor line.
- (3) A vessel operator, crew member, or other persons on board a fishing vessel of the United States that is used to fish for HMS may not remove a data buoy or any parts thereof from the water and place it on board the fishing vessel or tow a data buoy when in the Convention Area unless authorized to do so by the owner of the data buoy or an authorized representative or agent of the owner. When practicable, advance written authorization must be available onboard a U.S. fishing vessel that has taken on board or tows a data buoy. In all other cases, a written document (e.g., fax, email) verifying the authorization must be obtained by the vessel owner or operator within 15 days of landing.
- (4) In the event that a fishing vessel of the United States that is used to fish for HMS or any of its fishing gear, equipment, or associated watercraft, becomes entangled with a data buoy while the fishing vessel is in the Convention Area, the owner and operator of the fishing vessel must promptly remove the entangled fishing vessel, fishing gear, equipment, or associated watercraft with as little damage to the data buoy and its mooring and anchor lines as possible.
- (5) A vessel operator, crew member, or other persons on board a fishing vessel of the United States that is used to fish for HMS must take all reasonable measures to avoid fishing gear entanglement or interaction with drifting data buoys.

(g) *Pacific bluefin tuna (Thunnus orientalis) commercial catch limits, reporting requirements, and in-season action procedures* –

- (1) *Biennial catch limit for 2025-2026.* The biennial catch limit for 2025-2026 is 1,872.85 metric tons.
- (2) *Annual catch and trip limits for 2025.* For the calendar year 2025, all commercial fishing vessels of the United States combined may capture, retain, transship, or land no more than 1,285 metric tons. A 60 mt trip limit will be in effect until the following criteria are met:

If the time of year is . . .	And NMFS anticipates cumulative catch will be . . .	Then the trip limit will be . . .
(i) January through June	885 mt	40 mt.
	1,060 mt	5 mt.
(ii) July through September	985 mt	40 mt.
	1,110 mt	5 mt.
(iii) October through	1,085 mt	40 mt.

If the time of year is . . .	And NMFS anticipates cumulative catch will be . . .	Then the trip limit will be . . .
December	1,160 mt	5 mt.

(3) **Annual catch and trip limits for 2026.** For the calendar year 2026, all commercial fishing vessels of the United States combined may capture, retain, transship, or land no more than the amount caught in 2025 subtracted from the biennial limit, not to exceed 1,285 metric tons.

(i) If the 2026 catch limit is more than 200 metric tons, a 60-metric ton trip limit will be in effect until the following criteria are met:

If the time of year is . . .	And NMFS anticipates cumulative catch will be within . . .	Then the trip limit will be . . .
(A) January through June	400 mt of the annual limit	40 mt.
	225 mt of the annual limit	5 mt.
(B) July through September	300 mt of the annual limit	40 mt.
	175 mt of the annual limit	5 mt.
(C) October through December	200 mt of the annual limit	40 mt.
	125 mt of the annual limit	5 mt.

(ii) If the 2026 catch limit is 200 metric tons or less, the trip limit will be 5 metric tons for the entire calendar year.

(4) **In-season actions for trip limits and closure of the fishery.** If NMFS determines that action to change a trip limit needs to be taken under paragraph (g)(2) or (3) of this section, the revised trip limit will be effective upon the date provided in a notification of in-season action in accordance with paragraph (g)(5) of this section. Upon the effective date of an in-season action to change trip limits under paragraph (g)(2) or (3) of this section, targeting, retaining on board, transshipping, or landing Pacific bluefin tuna in the Convention Area in violation of the in-season action shall be prohibited, with the exception that any Pacific bluefin tuna already on board a fishing vessel on the effective date of the notification of in-season action may be retained on board and landed or transshipped within 24 hours after the effective date of the notice, to the extent authorized by applicable laws and regulations. After NMFS determines that the annual catch limits under paragraph (g)(2) or (3) of this section are expected to be reached, NMFS will close the fishery effective upon the date provided in the notification in accordance with paragraph (g)(5) of this section. Upon the effective date in the notification, targeting, retaining on board, transshipping, or landing Pacific bluefin tuna in the Convention Area shall be prohibited through the end of the calendar year, with the exception that any

Pacific bluefin tuna already on board a fishing vessel on the effective date of the notice may be retained on board and landed or transshipped within 14 days after the effective date published in the fishing closure notification, to the extent authorized by applicable laws and regulations.

- (5) **Announcement and effective dates of in-season actions.** If in-season actions under paragraphs (g)(2) through (4) of this section are needed, NMFS will post a notice on the NMFS web page announcing the in-season action, including effective dates. NMFS will also send emails with notice of the in-season action to affected vessel owners. This action will also be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER as soon as practicable. The in-season action will be effective upon whichever is earlier: receipt by email of such notice or publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER.
- (6) **Reversal of in-season actions.** If an in-season action taken under paragraphs (g)(2) through (5) of this section is based on an overestimate of actual catch, NMFS will reverse that action in the timeliest possible manner, provided NMFS finds that reversing that action is consistent with the management objectives for the affected species. The fishery will be subject to the change in trip limit or reopened effective on the date provided in the notice in accordance with paragraph (g)(5) of this section.
- (7) **State of California fish landing receipts.** If landing Pacific bluefin tuna into the State of California, fish landing receipts must be submitted within 24 hours to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in accordance with the requirements of applicable State regulations.

[64 FR 44431, Aug. 16, 1999]

**Editorial Note:** For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 300.25, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and at [www.govinfo.gov](http://www.govinfo.gov).

## § 300.26 Vessel monitoring system (VMS).

- (a) **Assistant Director (AD), NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, Pacific Islands Division (or designee) and VMS Helpdesk contact information and business hours.**
  - (1) The contact information for the AD for the purpose of this section: 1845 Wasp Blvd., Building 176, Honolulu, HI 96818; telephone: (808) 725-6100; facsimile: 808-725-6199; email: [pidvms@noaa.gov](mailto:pidvms@noaa.gov); business hours: Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Hawaii Standard Time.
  - (2) The contact information for the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement's VMS Helpdesk is telephone: (888) 219-9228, ext. 2; email: [ole.helpdesk@noaa.gov](mailto:ole.helpdesk@noaa.gov). The business hours of the VMS Helpdesk are Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., Eastern Time.
- (b) **Applicability.** This section applies to any U.S. commercial fishing vessel that is 24 meters or more in overall length and engaging in fishing activities for tuna or tuna-like species in the Convention Area, and for which either of the following permits is required: Pacific highly migratory species permit under § 660.707, or high seas fishing permit under § 300.13 of this part.
- (c) **Provisions for Installation, Activation and Operation —**
  - (1) **VMS Unit Installation.** The vessel owner or operator must obtain and have installed on the fishing vessel, in accordance with instructions provided by the AD and the VMS unit manufacturer, a VMS unit that is type-approved by NOAA for fisheries in the IATTC Convention Area. The vessel owner or operator shall arrange for a NOAA-approved mobile communications service provider to receive and

relay transmissions from the VMS unit to NOAA at a default reporting interval of at least once per hour. NOAA, the USCG, and other authorized entities are authorized to receive and relay transmissions from the VMS unit. The NOAA OLE VMS Helpdesk is available to provide instructions for VMS installation and a list of the current type-approved VMS units and mobile communication service providers.

- (2) **VMS Unit Activation.** If the VMS unit has not yet been activated as described in this paragraph, or if the VMS unit has been newly installed or reinstalled, or if the mobile communications service provider has changed since the previous activation, or if directed by the AD, the vessel owner or operator must, prior to leaving port:
  - (i) Turn on the VMS unit to make it operational;
  - (ii) Submit a written activation report to the AD, via mail, facsimile or email, that includes the vessel's name; the vessel's official number; the VMS unit manufacturer and identification number; and telephone, facsimile or email contact information for the vessel owner or operator; and
  - (iii) Receive verbal or written confirmation from the AD that the proper VMS unit transmissions are being received from the VMS unit.
- (3) **VMS Unit Operation.** The vessel owner and operator shall continuously operate the VMS unit at all times, except that the VMS unit may be shut down while the vessel is in port or otherwise not at sea, or if, after the end of the fishing season, the vessel will no longer be engaging in fishing activities in the Convention Area for which either a Pacific highly migratory species permit or a high seas fishing permit is required, provided that the owner or operator:
  - (i) Prior to shutting down the VMS unit, reports to the AD or the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement's VMS Helpdesk via facsimile, email, or web-form the following information: The intent to shut down the VMS unit; the vessel's name; the vessel's official number; an estimate for when the vessel's VMS may be turned back on; and telephone, facsimile or email contact information for the vessel owner or operator. In addition, the vessel owner or operator shall receive verbal or written confirmation from the AD before shutting down the VMS unit after the end of the fishing season; and
  - (ii) When turning the VMS unit back on, report to the AD or the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement's VMS Helpdesk, via mail, facsimile or email, the following information: That the VMS unit has been turned on; the vessel's name; the vessel's official number; and telephone, facsimile or email contact information for the vessel owner or operator; and
  - (iii) Prior to leaving port, receive verbal or written confirmation from the AD that proper transmissions are being received from the VMS unit.
- (4) **Failure of VMS unit.** If the VMS unit has become inoperable or transmission of automatic position reports from the VMS unit has been interrupted, or if notified by NOAA or the USCG that automatic position reports are not being received from the VMS unit or that an inspection of the VMS unit has revealed a problem with the performance of the VMS unit, the vessel owner or operator shall comply with the following requirements:
  - (i) If the vessel is at port: The vessel owner or operator shall repair or replace the VMS unit and ensure it is operable before the vessel leaves port.

(ii) If the vessel is at sea: The vessel owner, operator, or designee must contact the Assistant Director (AD) of NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) by telephone, facsimile, or email at the earliest opportunity during the AD's business hours and identify the caller and vessel. The vessel operator must follow the instructions provided by the AD which could include, but may not be limited to, ceasing fishing, stowing fishing gear, and/or returning to port. The vessel operator must also manually report to OLE every 6 hours by appropriate telecommunication means reports containing: the vessel's identification, the vessel's geographical position (latitude and longitude) accurate to within 100 meters, the date and time (UTC) of the fixing of the vessel's position, and the vessel's speed and course. These reports must continue until the vessel returns to port or the VMS unit is once again functioning normally. The vessel operator must repair or replace the VMS unit and ensure it is operable before starting the next trip.

(5) **Related VMS Requirements.** Installing, carrying and operating a VMS unit in compliance with the requirements in part 300 of this title, part 660 of this title, or part 665 of this title relating to the installation, carrying, and operation of VMS units shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this paragraph (c), provided that the VMS unit is operated continuously and at all times while the vessel is at sea, unless the AD authorizes a VMS unit to be shut down as described in paragraph (c)(3) of this section, the VMS unit and mobile communications service providers are type-approved by NOAA for fisheries in IATTC Convention Area, and the specific requirements of paragraph (c)(4) of this section are followed. If the VMS unit is owned by NOAA, the requirement under paragraph (c)(4) of this section to repair or replace the VMS unit will be the responsibility of NOAA, but the vessel owner and operator shall be responsible for ensuring that the VMS unit is operable before leaving port or starting the next trip.

(d) **Costs.** The vessel owner and operator shall be responsible for all costs associated with the purchase, installation and maintenance of the VMS unit and for all charges levied by the mobile communications service provider as necessary to ensure the transmission of automatic position reports to NOAA as required in paragraph (c) of this section. However, if NOAA is paying for the VMS-associated costs because the VMS unit is carried and operated under a requirement of part 300 of this title, part 660 of this title, or part 665 of this title, the vessel owner and operator shall not be responsible for costs that those regulations specify are the responsibility of NOAA. In addition, NOAA is responsible for the cost of any temporary increase in the default reporting interval to support active enforcement investigations of specific vessels.

(e) **Tampering.** The vessel owner and operator must ensure that the VMS unit is not tampered with, disabled, destroyed, damaged or maintained improperly, and that its operation is not impeded or interfered with.

(f) **Inspection.** The vessel owner and operator must make the VMS unit, including its antenna, connectors and antenna cable, available for inspection by authorized officers.

(g) **Access to data.** The vessel owner and operator must make the vessel's position data obtained from the VMS unit or other means immediately and always available for inspection by NOAA personnel, USCG personnel, and authorized officers.

[80 FR 60538, Oct. 7, 2015, as amended at 89 FR 54726, July 2, 2024]

### § 300.27 Incidental catch and tuna retention requirements.

- (a) **Tuna retention requirements for purse seine vessels.** Bigeye, skipjack, and yellowfin tuna caught in the Convention Area by a fishing vessel of the United States of class size 4-6 (more than 182 metric tons carrying capacity) using purse seine gear must be retained on board and landed, except for fish deemed unfit for human consumption for reasons other than size. This requirement shall not apply to the last set of a trip if the available well capacity is insufficient to accommodate the entire catch.
- (b) **Release requirements for fish species on purse seine vessels.** All purse seine vessels must release, as soon as practicable after being identified on board the vessel during the brailing operation, all billfish, rays (not including mobulid rays, which are subject to paragraph (i) of this section), dorado (*Coryphaena hippurus*), and other fish species. This requirement does not apply to tuna or tuna-like species, or to other fish retained for consumption aboard the vessel. Sharks caught in the IATTC Convention Area and that are not retained for consumption aboard the vessel must be released according to the requirements in paragraph (k) of this section. Tuna caught in the IATTC Convention Area are subject to the retention requirements in paragraph (a) of this section.
- (c) **Sea turtle handling and release.** All purse seine vessels must apply special sea turtle handling and release requirements, as follows:
- (1) Whenever a sea turtle is sighted in the net, a speedboat shall be stationed close to the point where the net is lifted out of the water to assist in release of the sea turtle;
  - (2) If a sea turtle is entangled in the net, net roll shall stop as soon as the sea turtle comes out of the water and shall not resume until the sea turtle has been disentangled and released;
  - (3) If, in spite of the measures taken under paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(2) of this section, a sea turtle is accidentally brought on board the vessel alive and active, the vessel's engine shall be disengaged and the sea turtle shall be released as quickly as practicable;
  - (4) If a sea turtle brought on board under paragraph (c)(3) of this section is alive but comatose or inactive, the resuscitation procedures described in § 223.206(d)(1)(i)(B) of this title shall be used before release of the turtle.
- (d) **Oceanic whitetip shark restrictions.** The crew, operator, or owner of a fishing vessel of the United States used to fish for HMS in the Convention Area shall be prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of an oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) and must release unharmed, to the extent practicable, all oceanic whitetip sharks when brought alongside the vessel.
- (e) **Silky shark restrictions for purse seine and longline vessels.** The crew, operator, and owner of a commercial purse seine or longline fishing vessel of the United States used to fish for tuna or tuna-like species is prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, storing, or landing any part or whole carcass of a silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) that is caught in the IATTC Convention Area, except as provided in paragraph (f) of this section.
- (f) **Exception for silky shark caught and frozen on purse seine vessels.** In the case of a purse seine vessel operating in the IATTC Convention Area that catches a silky shark that is not seen during fishing operations and is delivered into the vessel hold, the silky shark may be stored on board and landed, but the vessel owner or operator must surrender the whole silky shark to the responsible government authority present at the point of landing. In U.S. ports the responsible governmental authority is the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement divisional office nearest to the port, or other authorized personnel. If no

governmental authorities are available, the whole silky shark surrendered must not be sold or bartered but must be donated for purposes of domestic human consumption consistent with relevant laws and policies. The vessel owner or operator shall report these incidences to the IATTC Secretariat by recording them in the IATTC Regional Purse Seine Logbook, or another form identified by NMFS.

- (g) **Whale shark restrictions for purse seine vessels.** Owners, operators, and crew of fishing vessels of the United States commercially fishing for tuna in the Convention Area may not set or attempt to set a purse seine on or around a whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) if the animal is sighted prior to the commencement of the set or the attempted set.
- (h) **Whale shark release.** The crew, operator, and owner of a fishing vessel of the United States commercially fishing for tuna in the Convention Area must release as soon as possible, any whale shark that is encircled in a purse seine net, and must ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure its safe release. No whale shark may be towed out of a purse seine net (e.g., using towing ropes).
- (i) **Mobulid ray restrictions.** The crew, operator, and owner of a U.S. commercial fishing vessel is prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, storing, landing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of a mobulid ray that is caught in the IATTC Convention Area, except as provided in the following sentence. In the case of any mobulid ray caught in the IATTC Convention Area on an observed purse seine vessel that is not seen during fishing operations and is delivered into the vessel hold, the mobulid ray may be stored on board and landed, but the vessel owner or operator must show the whole mobulid ray to the on-board observer at the point of landing for recording purposes, and then dispose of the mobulid ray at the direction of the responsible government authority. In U.S. ports the responsible governmental authority is the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement divisional office nearest to the port, or other authorized personnel. Mobulid rays that are caught and landed in this manner may not be sold or bartered, but may be donated for purposes of domestic human consumption consistent with relevant laws and policies.
- (j) **Mobulid ray handling and release.** The crew, operator, and owner of a U.S. commercial fishing vessel must promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, any mobulid ray (whether live or dead) caught in the IATTC Convention Area as soon as it is seen in the net, on the hook, or on the deck, without compromising the safety of any persons. If a mobulid ray is live when caught, the crew, operator, and owner of a U.S. commercial fishing vessel must use the release procedures described in the following two paragraphs.
  - (1) No mobulid ray may be gaffed, no mobulid ray may be lifted by the gill slits or spiracles or by using bind wire against or inserted through the body, and no holes may be punched through the bodies of mobulid ray (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the mobulid ray).
  - (2) Applicable to purse seine operations, large mobulid rays must be brailled out of the net by directly releasing the mobulid ray from the brailer into the ocean. Large mobulid rays that cannot be released without compromising the safety of persons or the mobulid ray before being landed on deck, must be returned to the water as soon as possible, either utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the boat, or lowered with a sling or net, using a crane if available. The minimum size for the sling or net must be at least 25 feet in diameter.
- (k) **Shark handling and release requirements.**
  - (1) For purse seine vessels: the crew, operator, or owner of a U.S. commercial purse seine fishing vessel must promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, any shark (whether live or dead) caught in the IATTC Convention Area, as soon as it is seen in the net or on the deck, without compromising the safety of any persons. If a shark is live when caught, the crew, operator, or owner must follow these release procedures:

- (i) Sharks must be released out of the purse seine net by directly releasing the shark from the brailer into the ocean. Sharks that cannot be released without compromising the safety of persons or the sharks before being landed on deck must be returned to the water as soon as possible, either utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the boat or through escape hatches. If ramps or escape hatches are not available, the sharks must be lowered with a sling or cargo net, using a crane or similar equipment, if available.
- (ii) No shark may be gaffed or hooked, lifted by the head, tail, gill slits or spiracles, or lifted by using bind wire against or inserted through the body, and no holes may be punched through the bodies of sharks (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the shark).

(2) For longline vessels: the crew, operator, or owner of a U.S. commercial longline fishing vessel must promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, any shark (whether live or dead) caught in the IATTC Convention Area that is not retained, as soon as it is seen on the line, without compromising the safety of any persons. If a shark is live when seen on the line, the crew, operator, or owner must follow these release procedures:

- (i) Leave the shark in the water.
- (ii) Use a line clipper meeting the minimum design standards in paragraph (m) of this section to cut the branchline so that less than 1 meter (or 3.3 ft) of line remains on the animal. If this is not possible without compromising the safety of any persons, cut the branchline as close to the hook as possible.

(l) **Shark line prohibition for longline vessels.** Any U.S. longline vessel used to fish for tuna or swordfish is prohibited from using any shark line in the IATTC Convention Area.

(m) **Possession and use of required mitigation gear.**

(1) NMFS has established minimum design standards for line clippers. At least one line clipper meeting these design standards must be present onboard any longline vessel fishing in the IATTC Convention Area. The minimum design standards are as follows:

- (i) The line clipper must have a protected cutting blade. The cutting blade must be curved, recessed, contained in a holder, or otherwise afforded some protection to minimize direct contact of the cutting surface with animals or users of the cutting blade.
- (ii) The cutting blade edge must be capable of cutting 2.0-2.1 mm monofilament line and nylon or polypropylene multi-strand material commonly known as braided mainline or tarred mainline.
- (iii) The line clipper must have an extended reach handle or pole of at least 6 ft (1.82 m) for the cutting blade.
- (iv) The cutting blade must be securely fastened to the extended reach handle or pole to ensure effective deployment and use.

(2) [Reserved]

(n) **Prohibition on shark finning.** Vessel owners and operators must comply with regulations governing the harvest, possession, landing, purchase, and sale of shark fins found at 50 CFR part 600, subpart N.

[81 FR 50403, Aug. 1, 2016, as amended at 81 FR 86970, Dec. 2, 2016; 82 FR 56178, Nov. 28, 2017; 84 FR 70048, Dec. 20, 2019; 85 FR 29669, May 18, 2020; 87 FR 40741, July 8, 2022; 89 FR 54726, July 2, 2024]

**§ 300.28 FAD restrictions.**

**(a) FAD identification requirements for purse seine vessels.**

- (1) For each FAD deployed or modified on or after January 1, 2017, in the IATTC Convention Area, the vessel owner or operator must either: obtain a unique code from HMS Branch; or use an existing unique identifier associated with the FAD (e.g., the manufacturer identification code for the attached buoy).
- (2) U.S. purse seine vessel owners and operators shall ensure the characters of the unique code or unique identifier be marked indelibly at least five centimeters in height on the upper portion of the attached radio or satellite buoy in a location that does not cover the solar cells used to power the equipment. For FADs without attached radio or satellite buoys, the characters shall be on the uppermost or emergent top portion of the FAD. The vessel owner or operator shall ensure the marking is visible at all times during daylight. In circumstances where the on-board observer is unable to view the code, the captain or crew shall assist the observer (e.g., by providing the FAD identification code to the observer).

**(b) Activating FADs for purse seine vessels.** When deploying a FAD in the IATTC Convention Area, a vessel owner, operator, or crew must activate the satellite buoy while the FAD is onboard the purse seine vessel and before it is deployed in the water.

**(c) Restrictions on Active FADs for purse seine vessels.** U.S. vessel owners and operators of purse-seine vessels with the following well volume in cubic meters (m<sup>3</sup>) must not have more than the following number of Active FADs per vessel in the IATTC Convention Area at any one time, as specified in table 1 to this paragraph (c).

**TABLE 1 TO PARAGRAPH (c)**

Well volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	Active FAD limit
1,200 or more	340
426-1,199	210
213-425	85
0-212	50

**(d) Restrictions on satellite buoy deactivations.** A vessel owner or operator that deactivates a satellite buoy attached to a FAD must comply with the reporting requirements for buoy deactivations in § 300.22(c)(3). A U.S. vessel owner or operator shall only deactivate a satellite buoy attached to a FAD that was activated in the IATTC Convention Area in the following circumstances:

- (1) Complete loss of signal reception;
- (2) Beaching;
- (3) Appropriation of a FAD by a third party;

- (4) Temporarily during a selected closure period;
  - (5) For being outside of the area between the meridians 150° W and 100° W, and the parallels 8° N and 10° S; the area between the meridian 100° W and the coast of the American continent and the parallels 5° N and 15° S; or
  - (6) Transfer of ownership.
- (e) **Restrictions on satellite buoy reactivations.** A vessel owner or operator that reactivates a satellite buoy must comply with the reporting requirements for satellite buoy reactivations in § 300.22(c)(4). A U.S. vessel owner or operator shall only remotely reactivate a satellite buoy at sea that was activated in the IATTC Convention Area in the following circumstances:
- (1) To assist in the recovery of a beached FAD;
  - (2) After a temporary deactivation during the closure period; or
  - (3) Transfer of ownership while the FAD is at sea.
- (f) **Restrictions on FAD deployments, removals, and recovery.**
- (1) U.S. vessel owners, operators, and crew of purse seine vessels of class size 4-6 (more than 182 metric tons carrying capacity) must not deploy a FAD during a period of 15 days prior to the start of the selected closure period described in § 300.25(e)(1).
  - (2) During the 15 days prior to the start of the closure period selected by the vessel per § 300.25(e)(1), U.S. vessel owners, operators, and crew of purse seine vessels of class size 6 (greater than 363 metric tons carrying capacity) must remove from the water a number of FADs equal to the number of FADs set upon by the vessel during that same 15 day period.
  - (3) U.S. vessel owners and operators may recover FADs for final disposal or recycling. Recovery activities must be limited to the collection of FADs for final disposal or recycling and may not include any type of maintenance or adjustment on deployed FADs.
- (g) **Non-entangling FAD materials.** Beginning January 1, 2025, U.S. purse seine vessel owners and operators must ensure that the design and construction of any FAD to be deployed or redeployed (*i.e.*, placed in the water) in the IATTC Convention Area uses only non-entangling FAD materials.
- (h) **Biodegradable FAD materials.** In addition to complying with the requirement to use non-entangling materials specified in paragraph (g) of this section, vessel owners and operators must ensure that the design and construction of any FAD to be deployed or redeployed in the IATTC Convention Area meets the following specifications:
- (1) Beginning January 1, 2026, all FADs deployed or redeployed in the IATTC Convention Area must be designed and constructed according to one of the following sets of specifications:
    - (i) The surface part of the FAD must be made of fully biodegradable materials, except for flotation components (*e.g.*, plastic buoys, foam, purse-seine corks), whereas the subsurface part of the FAD may contain non-biodegradable materials (*e.g.*, synthetic raffia, metallic frame, plastic floats, nylon ropes); or
    - (ii) The subsurface part of the FAD must be made of fully biodegradable materials, whereas the surface part and any flotation components (*e.g.*, plastic buoys, foam, purse-seine corks) of the FAD may contain non-biodegradable materials (*e.g.*, synthetic raffia, metallic frame, plastic floats, nylon ropes); or

- (iii) The surface part, except for flotation components (e.g., plastic buoys, foam, purse-seine corks), and subsurface part must be made of fully biodegradable materials. Non-biodegradable materials, in particular nylon ropes, can be used exclusively to strengthen the structure of the floating or underwater component of the FAD.
- (2) Beginning January 1, 2029, all FADs deployed or redeployed in the IATTC Convention Area must be made of fully biodegradable materials, except for flotation components (e.g., plastic buoys, foam, purse seine corks), which may be made of non-biodegradable material. Non-biodegradable materials, in particular nylon ropes, can be used exclusively to strengthen the structure of the floating or underwater component of the FAD.
- (3) Restrictions on biodegradable FAD materials set forth in paragraphs (h)(1) and (2) of this section do not apply to satellite buoys that are attached to FADs in order to track them.

[83 FR 15510, Apr. 11, 2018, as amended at 83 FR 62734, Dec. 6, 2018; 87 FR 40741, July 8, 2022; 89 FR 96909, Dec. 6, 2024; 90 FR 22027, May 23, 2025]

### § 300.29 Observers.

The following requirements apply to all on-board fisheries observers required under this subpart, which includes observers on purse seine, longline vessels, and transshipment carrier vessels, and while on a fishing trip in the IATTC Convention Area.

- (a) **Contact information.** A full list of U.S. longline and IATTC purse seine observer providers and U.S. Government contacts for situations described in paragraphs (b) through (d) of this section is available at the following website: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/partners/emergency-contacts-vessel-owners-operators-and-observers-longline-and-purse>.
- (b) **Loss of life.** In the event that an observer dies, is missing, or presumed fallen overboard, the owner or operator of the fishing vessel must immediately notify a U.S. Government contact and the observer provider.
- (c) **Serious illness or injury.** The owner or operator of a fishing vessel of the United States shall immediately report serious illness or injury that threatens the life and/or long-term health or safety of an observer to the observer provider and a U.S. Government contact. In addition, the owner or operator of the fishing vessel must:
  - (1) Immediately cease fishing operations;
  - (2) Take all reasonable actions to care for the observer and provide any medical treatment available and possible on board the vessel, and where appropriate seek external medical advice;
  - (3) Where directed by the observer provider, if not already directed by the appropriate U.S. Government contact, facilitate the disembarkation and transport of the observer to a medical facility equipped to provide the required care, as soon as practicable; and
  - (4) Cooperate fully in any official investigations into the cause of the illness or injury.

- (d) **Assault, intimidation, threat, or harassment.** For reporting violations in the event that an observer on a fishing vessel of the United States has been assaulted, intimidated, threatened, or harassed, the owner or operator of the fishing vessel shall immediately notify the observer provider and the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement West Coast Division Duty Officer line at (206) 526-4851 of the situation and the status and location of the observer. In addition, the owner or operator of the fishing vessel must:
- (1) Immediately take action to preserve the safety of the observer and mitigate and resolve the situation on board;
  - (2) If the observer or the observer provider indicate that they wish for the observer to be removed from the vessel, facilitate the safe disembarkation of the observer in a manner and place, as agreed by the observer provider and a U.S. Government contact, that facilitates access to any needed medical treatment; and
  - (3) Cooperate fully in any official investigations into the incident.

[85 FR 29669, May 18, 2020]