



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS HMS PERMIT & REPORTING

**Q:** *What is the new HMS angling permit requirement?*

**A:** NOAA Fisheries now requires recreational vessel owners who target any regulated highly migratory fish species in federal waters of the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Caribbean to get a federal vessel permit. The permit allows all anglers aboard to fish for highly migratory fish.

**Q:** *Which species does the permit cover?*

**A:** The HMS angling permit is required if fishing for any federally regulated highly migratory species: Atlantic tunas (bluefin, yellowfin, bigeye, skipjack, and albacore) and sharks, swordfish, white and blue marlin, sailfish and spearfish.

**Q:** *Do I have to get the HMS angling permit for catch and release?*

**A:** Yes. The regulation requires the permit to “fish for,” highly migratory species, which includes the catch and release fishery. This information is valuable for stock assessments.

**Q:** *Does everyone on board need a permit?*

**A:** No. The permit is issued to the fishing vessel, so the vessel owner/operator’s permit would cover all passengers on board.

**Q:** *Why is NOAA Fisheries requiring recreational fishermen to get a permit for highly migratory species?*

**A:** Most of these fish stocks are overfished and undergoing rebuilding. Permitting and regulation of the commercial fishing industry has been an important part of this effort. However, the recreational sector also must help in the rebuilding of these stocks. The angling permit will assist NOAA Fisheries in gauging how many anglers are targeting highly migratory fish, the number of trips they take, and the amount of fish they land -- information that will be useful in identifying management & rebuilding needs.

**Q:** *Do charterboats and headboats need the HMS angling permit?*

**A:** No. The agency issues permits for the HMS charter/headboat fishery and manages the fleet as a unique sector due to its intrinsic mix of commercial and recreational operations. Charter and headboat operators will continue to apply for the HMS charter/headboat permit, which covers the same fish as the HMS angling permit.

**Q:** *How do I get the permit?*

**A:** You can apply and pay for the permit online at [www.nmfspermits.com](http://www.nmfspermits.com), or by calling 1-888-872-8862.



**Q:** *I am a recreational fisherman and currently have the Atlantic tunas angling permit. Do I also need to get the new HMS angling permit if I also fish for swordfish and other HMS species?*

**A:** You do not need an additional permit because the tuna permit and the angling permit are merging to become one permit. Upon renewal of your current tuna permit, you will be issued the HMS angling permit.

**Q:** *I hold the General Category permit to sell tuna. Can I also get the HMS angling permit?*

**A:** No. The new HMS angling permit completes a process NOAA Fisheries initiated several years ago to separate commercial and recreational fishing activities for Atlantic highly migratory species. Since only one permit can be issued to a vessel, fishermen who have held general category permits in order to sell tunas will have to choose between the commercial and recreational fishing rules.

**Q:** *Where do federal waters begin?*

**A:** States have jurisdiction in marine waters from the shore to 3 miles in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, except Florida's West coast and Texas, whose jurisdictions extend to 9 miles offshore. Federal waters begin where state jurisdictions end and extend to 200 miles offshore.

**Q:** *How much does the permit cost? Where is the money going?*

**A:** The HMS angling permit costs \$22. All the money collected will offset administrative fees to run the HMS angling permit and reporting programs.

**Q:** *Do I need the federal HMS angling permit if I only fish for sharks, billfish, or swordfish in state waters?*

**A:** Presently, the federal HMS angling permit is not required to fish for HMS species, except tunas, in state waters. Fishermen should abide by state regulations when fishing in state waters.

NOAA Fisheries is considering initiating administrative processes to extend the federal HMS angling permit to the shore in states that do not have a comparable system of identifying saltwater anglers who target HMS.

**Q:** *What is the new requirement to report HMS landings?*

**A:** Within 24 hours of landing billfish (blue and white marlin and sailfish) and swordfish caught in federal waters of the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Caribbean, holders of the HMS angling permit must call NOAA Fisheries to report what they landed.

**Q:** *Why is it necessary for recreational fishermen to report HMS landings? How will this information be used?*

**A:** Knowledge about fish that anglers bring to shore will aid fisheries managers in monitoring catch levels for federal and international quotas and developing appropriate management programs.

**Q:** *Do I have to report landings I've made while participating in a tournament?*

**A:** Individual anglers participating in registered tournaments do not need to report landings if the tournament operator is already reporting to NOAA Fisheries.

**Q:** *How do I report my landings?*

**A:** Report your billfish and swordfish landings within 24 hours by calling 1-800-894-5528. Report your bluefin tuna landings to 1-888-872-8862 or online at [www.nmfspermits.com](http://www.nmfspermits.com).

**Q:** *What is the definition of "landings?"*

**A:** Landings are considered those fish that are killed and brought to shore.

**For more information about the new HMS permit, visit our Web site at [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov).**

