

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) manages Atlantic billfish (including blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish and longbill spearfish) and Atlantic swordfish to ensure long-term, sustainable fisheries for these species.

HMS ANGLING PERMIT

- Owners of vessels used to fish recreationally (*i.e.*, no sale of fish) for Atlantic HMS (billfish, swordfish, sharks and tunas) are required to obtain an HMS Angling category permit from NMFS.
- Recreational fishermen may not sell, barter, or trade Atlantic HMS when fishing with an HMS Angling category permit.
- Recreational bag limits, size limits, and reporting requirements apply to each species.
- Owners of vessels that catch, retain, possess, or land Atlantic billfish should have this permit, because minimum size and other requirements apply to any billfish harvested from the management unit (Atlantic Ocean), regardless of where caught. For Atlantic swordfish, this permit is required when fishing in Federal and international waters, although additional state regulations for fishing permits and reporting may also apply.
- Permit holders must abide by all applicable Federal regulations, regardless of where fishing occurs, including in state waters. When fishing in waters of a state with more stringent regulations, vessels issued a HMS Angling or Charter/Headboat (CHB) category permit must abide by the more restrictive state regulations.

HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT PERMIT

- Owners of vessels that carry passengers for hire and fish for Atlantic HMS must obtain an annual HMS CHB category permit.

- Recreational anglers fishing onboard a permitted CHB vessel do not need a permit.
- Swordfish and sharks can only be sold if appropriate commercial permits have also been issued to the vessel. Atlantic billfish may never be sold or purchased.
- Reporting and other requirements apply.
- Owners of vessels that catch, retain, possess, or land Atlantic billfish should have this permit, because minimum size and other requirements apply to any billfish harvested from the management unit (Atlantic Ocean), regardless of where caught. For Atlantic swordfish, this permit is required when fishing in Federal and international waters, although additional state regulations for fishing permits and reporting may also apply. Reporting and other requirements apply.
- Permit holders must abide by all applicable Federal regulations, regardless of where fishing occurs, including in state waters. When fishing in waters of a state with more stringent regulations, vessels issued a HMS Angling or CHB category permit must abide by the more restrictive state regulations.

HOW DO I OBTAIN A PERMIT?

Atlantic HMS Angling, and Atlantic HMS CHB category permits are available by calling 1-888-872-8862 or by logging onto www.hmspermits.gov.

AUTHORIZED GEARS

Species	Authorized Gears
Billfishes	Rod & Reel
Swordfish	Rod & Reel; handline*

*Handlines must be attached to, or remain in contact with, the vessel at all times.

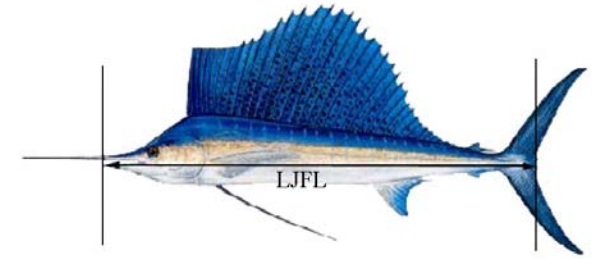
BILLFISH TOURNAMENT CIRCLE HOOK REQUIREMENTS

Billfish tournament circle hook requirements have been suspended from May 11, 2007 – December 31, 2007, to allow anglers time to become proficient with circle hooks and familiar with their benefits. During this period, J-hooks may be used by billfish tournament anglers with any hook and bait combination. Beginning January 1, 2008, anglers fishing from HMS permitted vessels and participating in billfish tournaments must use only non-offset circle hooks when deploying natural bait or natural bait artificial lure combinations. Tournament anglers may deploy “J”-hooks with artificial lures. NMFS encourages the use of circle hooks by non-tournament anglers to reduce post-release mortality of Atlantic billfish.

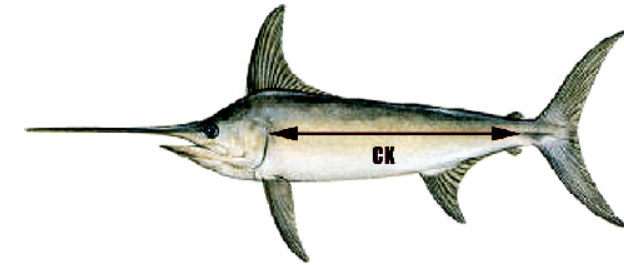
MINIMUM SIZE OR WEIGHT LIMITS*

Blue Marlin	99 inches (LJFL)
White Marlin	66 inches (LJFL)
Sailfish	63 inches (LJFL)
Longbill Spearfish	Prohibited
Swordfish	47 inches (LJFL), or 29 inches (CK), or 33 lb. minimum dressed weight

*Applies to billfish from the management unit (Atlantic Ocean) regardless of where caught and Atlantic swordfish in federal and international waters. Additional state regulations may also apply.



Whole Fish—lower jaw fork length (LJFL)



Head or Tail Removed—cleithrum to caudal keel (CK)

To maintain compliance with the annual U.S. 250 Atlantic marlin recreational landing limit, NMFS can increase minimum sizes during a fishing year to between 117 – 138 inches (LJFL) for Atlantic blue marlin and 70 – 79 inches (LJFL) for Atlantic white marlin. Minimum sizes would revert to those identified above at the start of the next fishing year. If NMFS determines that the U.S. has or will exceed its annual landing limit despite minimum size increases, the Agency can prohibit possession of Atlantic marlins until additional marlins become available for landing from ICCAT.

LANDING RESTRICTIONS

Atlantic billfish must be landed with head, fins, and bill intact through offloading. Atlantic swordfish must be landed in round or dressed form through offloading.

RECREATIONAL SWORDFISH BAG LIMIT

Effective July 9, 2007, vessels issued an HMS Angling category permit may retain, possess, or land no more than one North Atlantic swordfish per person, up to four per vessel per trip. Vessels issued an HMS CHB permit that are charter vessels may retain, possess, or land no more than one North Atlantic swordfish per paying passenger, up to six per vessel per trip. Vessels issued an HMS CHB permit that are headboat vessels are similarly limited to no more than one North Atlantic swordfish per paying passenger, up to 15 per vessel per trip. A charter boat means a vessel that is less than 100 gross tons (90.8 mt) that meets the requirements of the USCG to carry six or fewer passengers for hire. A headboat means a vessel that holds a valid Certificate of Inspection issued by the USCG to carry passengers for hire. Recreational anglers may not land Atlantic swordfish south of 5°N latitude.

“NO SALE” BY HMS ANGLING CATEGORY PERMIT HOLDERS

HMS Angling category permit holders are not allowed to sell, barter, or trade Atlantic swordfish or swordfish pieces, unless they also possess a valid commercial swordfish permit. Because the commercial swordfish fishery operates under limited access, new permits are not available. The transfer of any existing limited access commercial swordfish permit must be approved by NMFS.

Persons may not sell or purchase any Atlantic billfish. Atlantic blue and white marlin may only be possessed onboard a vessel that has been issued an Atlantic HMS Angling or CHB category permit, or onboard a vessel that has been issued a Atlantic General category tuna permit and is participating in a registered HMS tournament.

RECREATIONAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Owners of recreational and Charter/Headboat vessels **must report** landings (*i.e.*, fish kept) of recreationally-caught Atlantic blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and swordfish to NMFS by calling toll-free 1-800-894-5528 within 24 hours of landing at the dock. During the call, the vessel owner will be asked to provide their name, phone number, HMS permit number, species caught, and size of fish. NMFS will return the call and provide a confirmation of the reported landing. The vessel owner is responsible for reporting, but the owner’s designee may fulfill reporting requirements. In Maryland and North Carolina, vessel owners should report their recreational billfish and swordfish landings at state-operated reporting stations. For reporting information in Maryland, contact (410) 213-1531. In North Carolina, contact (800) 338-7804. Vessel permit holders are responsible for reporting tournament related landings, if tournament operators do not fulfill tournament reporting requirements.

HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT LOGBOOKS

NMFS may select permitted Charter/Headboats to complete a logbook for each trip. Selected Charter/Headboat permit holders will be notified of the logbook requirement by letter.

VOLUNTARY OBSERVER PROGRAM FOR CHARTER/HEADBOATS

A voluntary observer program is being used to more effectively monitor catch and release rates, and condition and survival of released fish. If you would like to participate in the observer program contact the HMS Division at (301) 713-2347.

APPLICABILITY OF MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Generally, U.S.-flagged vessels and U.S. citizens must comply with Atlantic billfish and swordfish regulations *throughout the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent waters*—this includes state waters. When fishing in waters of a state with more stringent regulations, vessels issued a HMS Angling or CHB category permit must abide by the more restrictive state regulations. Please call HMS Headquarters if you have a question about a specific situation.

BILLFISH CATCH AND RELEASE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

NMFS encourages catch and release of Atlantic billfish, and the use of circle hooks to maximize post-release survival. A fish that is not retained must be released by in a manner that will maximize its survival by cutting the line or using a dehooking device, and without removing the fish from the water.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/

www.hmspermits.gov

1-888-872-8862 (HMS Permits)

1-301-713-2347 (HMS Headquarters)

1-727-824-5399 (Southeast HMS Office)

Sign up for Atlantic HMS News at

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/newslst>

Atlantic Billfish & Atlantic Swordfish Recreational Management Measures



National Marine Fisheries Service

Office of Sustainable Fisheries
Highly Migratory Species Management
Division

This pamphlet provides a summary of HMS regulations, as of June 2007. For the complete and official set of regulations, see 50 CFR part 635 and the Federal Register, or call the Highly Migratory Species Management Division at 301-713-2347. If there is a discrepancy between the regulations in 50 CFR part 635 and this brochure, the regulations will take precedence. This brochure is produced in compliance with Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.