

Commercial Swordfish Permits

To fish for, catch, possess, retain, or land swordfish with buoy gear, you must have a valid commercial swordfish handgear limited access permit, or a valid directed swordfish limited access permit. Incidental swordfish permit holders may not fish for, catch, possess, retain, or land swordfish with buoy gear. Commercial swordfish permits are administered under a limited access program, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is no longer issuing new commercial swordfish permits. To obtain a permit, it must be transferred, within the upgrading restrictions, from someone who is leaving the fishery. Contact the Southeast Regional Office for information on renewing or transferring permits (727-824-5326).

Authorized Handgear

Handgear includes buoy gear, handline, rod and reel, harpoon, and bandit gear. Handlines must be attached to, or in contact with, the vessel.

Buoy Gear Construction and Deployment Restrictions

Buoy gear is defined as a fishing gear consisting of one or more floatation devices supporting a single mainline to which no more than two hooks or gangions are attached.

Floatation device is defined as any positively buoyant object rigged to be attached to a fishing gear.

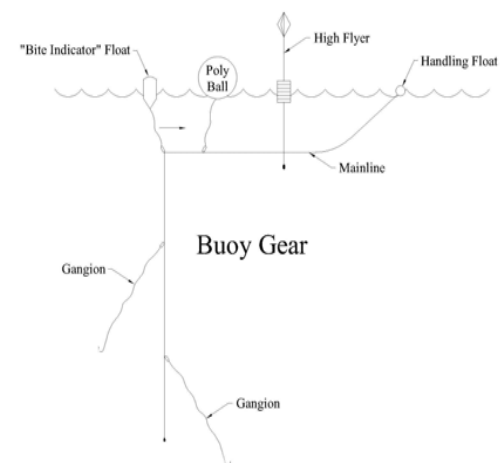
Fishermen using buoy gear are limited to possessing or deploying no more than 35 individual floatation devices and are required to mark each floatation device with the vessel's name, registration number, or HMS

permit number, as per regulations at 50 CFR § 635.6 (c).

Buoy gear must be constructed and deployed so that the hooks are attached to the vertical portion of the mainline. Floatation devices may be attached to one, but not both ends of the mainline, and no hooks or gangions may be attached to any floatation device or horizontal portion of the mainline. If more than one floatation device is attached to a buoy gear, no hook or gangion may be attached to the mainline between them.

Individual buoy gears may not be linked or connected together in any way, and all buoy gears are required to be released and retrieved by hand.

Additionally, fishermen using buoy gear must affix gear monitoring equipment to each individual buoy gear to aid in recovery. Gear monitoring equipment may include, but is not limited to, radar reflectors, beeper devices, lights, or reflective tape. If only reflective tape is used, the vessel deploying the gear must possess an operable spotlight capable of illuminating deployed buoys. If a gear monitoring device is positively buoyant and rigged to be attached to a fishing gear, it would be included in the 35 floatation device vessel limit and would be required to be marked appropriately.



A diagram of a buoy gear constructed with four floatation devices attached

Retention Limits

North Atlantic Swordfish

Directed and Handgear - no trip limit (when the directed fishery closes, handgear fishermen may retain two swordfish per trip, however, no swordfish may be retained on harpoon trips).

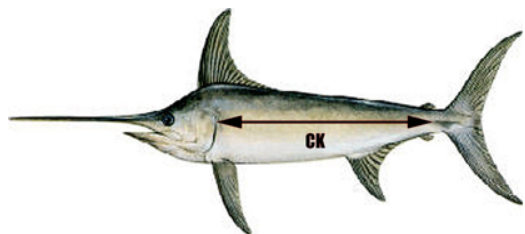
Incidental - No retention with buoy gear.

Minimum Size & Weight Limit

Whole Fish - 47" lower jaw fork length (LJFL)



Head or Tail Removed - 29" cleithrum to caudal



keel (CK)

Minimum Dressed Weight - 33 lb

These size and weight limits apply to U.S. citizens and U.S.-flagged vessels throughout the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent waters. Fish must be kept in whole or dressed form through landing. "Dressed" indicates a headed/gutted fish with some or all fins removed. You cannot cut the fish into smaller pieces on board the vessel.

Reporting Requirements

If NMFS sends you a letter selecting you to complete logbook reports, you must complete a logbook within 48 hours of each day's fishing activities for multi-day trips, or before offloading for one-day trips, and submit the logbook within 7 days of offloading. If NMFS sends you a letter selecting you to complete the cost-earnings section of the logbook, you must complete and submit that section of the logbook within 30 days of offloading. This economic data section must be completed in addition to the other logbook reporting requirements.

Dealers and Importers

Anyone who buys or imports swordfish must have a dealer permit. Dealers must report to NMFS all swordfish purchased from U.S. vessels through biweekly reports. For information on swordfish dealer permits, please call the Southeast Regional Permit Office at (727) 824-5326.

General Information

If you would like to receive regular swordfish postings from our HMS E-mail network, please contact the HMS Management Division at (301) 713-2347. Alternatively, information about all Federal fisheries, including the commercial swordfish fishery, can be obtained electronically via FISHNEWS. Please see www.nmfs.noaa.gov to sign up for this service.

Check out these HMS Webpages & Info Lines...

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

www.hmspermits.gov

1-888-872-8862 (HMS Permits)

1-800-894-5528 (Info Line)

Tuna Issues

HMS Northeast Regional Office

Gloucester, MA

978-281-9260

Commercial Swordfish & Shark Issues

HMS Headquarters

Silver Spring, MD

301-713-2347

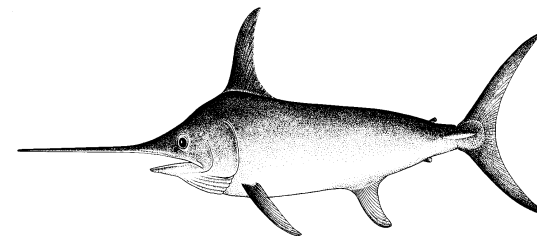
Recreational Swordfish & Billfish Issues

HMS Southeast Regional Office

St. Petersburg, FL

727-824-5399

The Use of Buoy Gear in the Commercial Atlantic Swordfish Fisheries



National Marine Fisheries Service

Office of Sustainable Fisheries

Highly Migratory Species Management Division

August 2007

This pamphlet was prepared to provide a summary of commercial buoy gear swordfish regulations. For the complete and official set of regulations, see 50 CFR part 635 and the Federal Register. A copy of complete fishery regulations that apply to recreational fishermen may be obtained by calling the Highly Migratory Species Management Division at 301-713-2347. Since fishery rules are subject to change, fishermen must familiarize themselves with the latest complete regulations and are responsible for complying with current official regulations. If there is a discrepancy between the regulations in 50 CFR part 635 and this pamphlet, the