



## **NMFS ANNOUNCES DECISION TO EXTEND EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT TO CONDUCT PELAGIC LONGLINE RESEARCH IN THE EAST FLORIDA COAST AND CHARLESTON BUMP AREAS**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces a final decision to issue a one-year extension of Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) 08-02 to continue scientific research in the East Florida Coast (EFC) and Charleston Bump closed areas. This action will also increase the area authorized for research in the EFC by 10 nautical miles (nmi) from 79° 40' to 79° 50' West Longitude in areas south of 30° North Latitude (Figure 1), and will allow vessels to retain prohibited and undersized species that are dead at haulback for scientific purposes.

After analyzing the proposed modifications and taking into consideration all related public comments, NMFS has decided to extend the EFP until February 28, 2010, and allow a 10 nmi increase to the research area in the EFC and the retention of prohibited and undersized species for scientific purposes. NMFS announced a final decision to issue EFPs to conduct research in portions of the EFC and Charleston Bump areas using a limited number of pelagic longline (PLL) vessels on January 3, 2008 (73 FR 450). The initial EFP for this research was issued on February 15, 2008, and authorized 289 PLL sets, of which 145 were to be conducted in open areas and 144 to be conducted in closed areas, in order to collect PLL baseline data of the closed areas, examine current PLL bycatch reduction measures, and evaluate the effectiveness of the closed areas in meeting current conservation and harvesting goals. To date, only 59 of the 289 sets that were authorized under the initial EFP have been completed. The majority of those sets have been conducted in open areas (40), with only 13 taking place in closed areas. The extension of this EFP will allow the researchers to complete the remaining 105 sets in the open areas and 131 sets in the closed areas that were initially authorized under the EFP. The extension of this EFP will not change any research objectives and will not allow an increase in fishing effort that was previously authorized.

The purpose of 10 nmi extension to the west in the EFC is to provide sufficient space for the researchers to set their PLL gear in a manner that mirrors historic fishing effort in the area. Access to this area will allow the researchers to “anchor” their gear in slower moving water outside of the main axis of the Gulf Stream, where they were encountering problems setting the gear properly. The researchers requested to extend the authorized area to 31° North Latitude, but in response to public comment, and because the space necessary for proper deployment of PLL gear applies only to the southern portion of the proposed extension, NMFS decided to limit the extension to 30° North Latitude (Figure 1). The 10 nmi extension will not increase the number of sets or the amount of fishing effort authorized to take place in the closed areas authorized under the initial EFP.

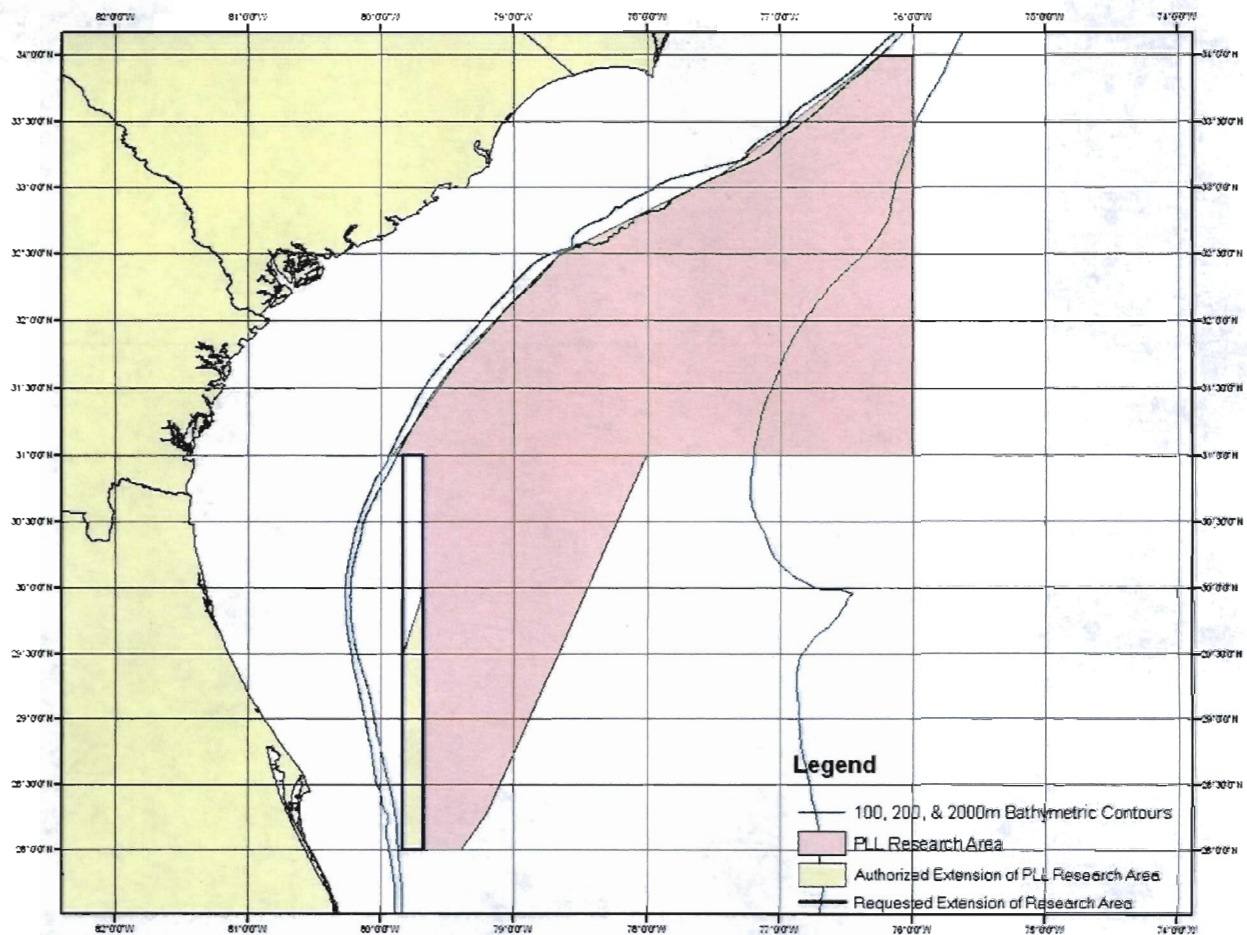


This notice is a courtesy to HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. For more information regarding this EFP extension, please contact Chris Rilling at 301-713-2347. Information will also be posted on the HMS Management Division website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>

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*for James P. Burgen*  
Alan Risenhoover  
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Figure 1.** Area authorized to conduct research using pelagic longline vessels, including the 10 nmi extension (in yellow) to the area currently authorized for research (in pink).

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