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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 10, 2007

Internet Reporting for Swordfish and Billfish Landings Will Improve Management

To improve the management of swordfish and other billfish, NOAA Fisheries Service will launch a new website on Oct. 17 where anglers can report landings of Atlantic swordfish, sailfish, blue marlin and white marlin.

More timely and more complete data on recreational landings will help NOAA Fisheries better manage these Atlantic highly migratory species and will assist in the compliance with international obligations. The website will not be for fish caught as part of a tournament.

"We're asking for help from anglers to improve our information on swordfish and billfish landings," said William T. Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries Service. "This new web site will make it easier for recreational fishermen to report their catches as is required. In turn, this improved data will help the U.S. know exactly what our recreational fishermen are catching so that the U.S. has the strongest hand possible when we negotiate quotas internationally. This is also important information when the U.S. sets quotas here to conserve and manage these fish for today's fishermen and future generations."

Starting Oct. 17, owners of vessels with Highly Migratory Species permits, or their designees, should report all recreational non-tournament swordfish and billfish landings using the newly designed web-based reporting system at <http://www.hmspermits.gov>. To log-in and report a swordfish or billfish landing, vessel owners will need to provide the following: HMS Angling or Charter/Headboat category permit number; trip dates; catch; and fishing gear and technique.

After a landing report has been successfully completed on-line, vessel owners will receive a confirmation number for each individual fish reported landed. There is an option to print the confirmation numbers or have them sent electronically to a personal email account. A swordfish or billfish landing report is not considered complete unless the vessel owner, or the owner's designee, has received a confirmation number.

The new web-based reporting system will be the primary reporting portal for recreational swordfish and billfish landings; however, NOAA Fisheries will maintain and monitor the current toll-free reporting line to assist those vessel owners who do not have access to the internet.

Owners of private vessels that fish recreationally for Atlantic HMS, or on which Atlantic HMS are retained or possessed, are required to have an Atlantic HMS Angling category permit. Owners of for-hire vessels used to take anglers fishing for a fee are required to have the HMS Charter/Headboat category permit. For more information on the HMS Angling or Charter/Headboat category permit, log on to <http://www.hmspermits.gov> or call the HMS Management Division's St. Petersburg office at 727-824-5399. NOAA Fisheries also encourages all who fish for HMS to use circle hooks to help minimize injuries to, and mortality of, released fish.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries Service, please visit: www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>