



Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

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MACKEREL, SQUID, AND BUTTERFISH FISHERIES

Amendment 14 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan
New Notification, Sampling, and Permit Requirements

Effective Date: March 26, 2014; VMS requirements effective September 1, 2014

Amendment 14 revises management of the Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish (MSB) fisheries to improve the monitoring and sampling of catch at-sea, with a focus on evaluating catch of river herring and shad in these fisheries. The new management measures mostly affect limited access mackerel and longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit holders, but some management measures also affect the *Illex* squid moratorium permit holders.

We will send you a comprehensive reporting guide for the MSB fisheries, including the new and revised measures established in Amendment 14. (Note: measures for the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) are not effective until September 1, 2014.) In the meantime, please refer the description of additional reporting requirements explained in this letter.

New Vessel Trip Report (VTR) Requirement for all MSB permits

If you have one of the following permits, you will have to submit weekly VTRs by midnight of the first Tuesday following the end of a reporting week:

- Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 mackerel permits (SMB T1, SMB T2, and SMB T3)
- Longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits (SMB 1)
- *Illex* squid moratorium permits (SMB 5)
- SMB Charter/Party permits (SMB 2)
- Open access mackerel permits (SMB 4)
- Squid/butterfish incidental permits (SMB 3)

Pre-Trip Observer Notification Requirements for Limited Access Mackerel Permits

If you have a limited access mackerel permit (Tier 1, 2 or 3) you must contact NMFS at least 48 hr in advance of a fishing trip to request an observer.

Call the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program at (774) 392-2735 and provide the following information: Vessel name, permit category, and permit number; contact name for coordination of observer deployment; telephone number for contact; the date, time, and port of departure; gear type; target species; and intended area of fishing.

If you have a limited access mackerel permit and do not notify the Observer Program before beginning a declared mackerel trip, you are prohibited from possessing, harvesting, or landing over 20,000 lb of mackerel on that trip.

If you cancel your fishing trip, you or a vessel representative must notify the Observer Program of the cancelled trip, even if your vessel was not selected to carry an observer.

For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Greater Atlantic Region.

The Observer Program will issue waivers or selection notices for observer coverage via VMS so your vessel will have an on-board verification of either the observer selection or waiver.

Any vessel with a Herring Category A or B permit or any vessel with a herring permit fishing with midwater trawl gear in Herring Management Areas 1A, 1B, and/or 3 still must call the Observer Program at least 72-hr in advance of a fishing trip to request an observer.

New At-Sea Sampling Requirements for Vessels with Limited Access Mackerel and Longfin Squid Permits

If you have a limited access mackerel (Tier 1, 2, or 3) or longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit, you must provide NMFS observers with the following:

- 1) A safe sampling station adjacent to the fish deck, and a safe method to obtain and store samples;
- 2) Reasonable assistance to allow observers to complete their duties;
- 3) Advance notice when pumping will start and end, and when sampling of the catch may begin; and
- 4) Visual access to net/codend or purse seine and any of its contents after pumping has ended, including bringing the codend and its contents aboard if possible.

If your vessel is carrying a NMFS observer, you must bring all catch aboard the vessel and make it available to the observer for sampling.

- 1) If catch is discarded before it has been made available to the observer, that catch is defined as slippage.
- 2) Fish that cannot be pumped and remain in the net at the end of pumping operations are considered operational discards and not slippage.
- 3) Discards that occur after catch has been brought on board and sorted are also not considered slippage.

If your vessel is carrying a NMFS observer, the vessel may slip catch if: (1) Bringing catch aboard compromises safety, (2) mechanical failure prevents the catch from being brought aboard, or (3) spiny dogfish clog the pump and prevent the catch from being pumped aboard.

If you slip catch, even for one of the reasons described above, you must complete a released catch affidavit form. The released catch affidavit form is available on the Greater Atlantic Region website. The completed form must be mailed to the Sustainable Fisheries Division at the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office within 48 hr of the end of the fishing trip.

The released catch affidavit must detail: (1) Why catch was slipped, (2) an estimate of the quantity and species composition of the slipped catch, and (3) the time and location of the slipped catch.

River herring and shad catch cap on the mackerel fishery

Amendment 14 included a cap on river herring and shad catch in the mackerel fishery. The cap will be implemented as part of 2014 MSB Specifications, and details about requirements and reporting will be included in the bulletin for that action.

New VMS Requirements

The VMS requirements for limited access mackerel and longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permits do not go into effect until September 1, 2014.

If your vessel was issued a limited access mackerel permit (Tiers 1, 2 and 3) or a longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit, you will be required to install and operate a VMS by the effective date and comply with all VMS reporting requirements in port and at sea. When intending to take a mackerel or longfin squid trip, you must submit daily VMS catch reports.

Reimbursement for VMS units is available on a first come, first serve basis. More information on the VMS reimbursement program is available on our website at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/vms/>, from the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission at <http://www.psmfc.org/> (under 'programs'), or from the NMFS VMS Support Center by calling 888-219-9228.

Approved VMS vendors and units are: Boatracs (FMCT/G), CLS America (TST-100), CMPSC (Thrane TT-3026D), SkyMate (ST-2500G). More information is available on the VMS webpage or by calling the VMS Support Center.

If your vessel was issued a limited access mackerel permit or a longfin squid/butterfish moratorium permit, you must send the following reports from your VMS when intending to take a mackerel or longfin squid trip to notify the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement:

- 1) Activity Declaration. Prior to leaving port, your intent to participate in the mackerel or squid fishery by selecting and sending the appropriate activity and gear type on the VMS declaration screen in order to harvest, possess, or land mackerel/squid on that trip; and
- 2) Pre-Landing Notification. For mackerel trips only, when intending to land more than 20,000 lbs, the time and place of offloading at least 6 hrs prior to landing or, if fishing ends less than 6 hrs before landing, immediately upon leaving the fishing grounds.

You are prohibited from powering down your VMS when in port, unless specifically authorized by NMFS.

- 1) If your mackerel or longfin squid vessel will be out of the water for more than 72 hrs, you may request a Letter of Exemption (LOE) from NMFS to power down your VMS. The application for a "VMS Power Down Exemption Request" is available on the VMS web page.
- 2) If your vessel will remain at the dock/mooring for 30 consecutive days or more, you may also request an LOE to power down your VMS. Your vessel is prohibited from leaving the dock/mooring until the VMS unit is powered back up and a VMS activity declaration is sent.
- 3) In both cases above, you are prohibited from powering down your VMS until you have received the LOE from NMFS. You may also contact the VMS Team for an application.

Instructions for vessel owner/operators using a VMS to send required reports are available on the VMS web page. Please call the VMS Team at (978) 281-9213, option 2, for any VMS questions.

For more information, please visit the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region MSB webpage at: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/msb/>