



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

DEC 14 2004

NOTICE TO VESSEL OWNERS AND OPERATORS

Effective in mid-February 2005, regulations for the U.S. West Coast Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (FMP) will become mandatory under federal law. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has received clearance for most of the data collection elements contained in the FMP, and a notice to that effect will be published shortly in the *Federal Register*.

The purpose of this Notice is to provide information to the affected fleets concerning the vessel permit requirements in the FMP. The enclosed vessel permit application is provided to allow vessel owners and operators sufficient time to obtain the required permit before the mandatory FMP requirements become effective.

The FMP applies to U.S. flag fishing vessels targeting highly migratory species (HMS) within the U.S. West Coast exclusive economic zone and adjacent waters off the coast of California, Oregon, and Washington. The FMP identifies 13 management unit species including tunas, sharks, and billfishes and defines the legal gear types and management measures used to harvest them. The FMP incorporates many of the existing HMS federal and state regulations that are already in place for California, Oregon, and Washington. A complete copy of the HMS Fisheries Final Rule is available on-line at:
<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/hms/07apr04.pdf>

The FMP requires U.S. commercial fishing vessels and recreational charter fishing vessels (also known as commercial passenger fishing vessels) to obtain an HMS permit if that vessel is used to fish for HMS in the FMP management area. This includes vessels that land or transship HMS shoreward of the outer boundary of the U.S. EEZ off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington. At this time there is no cost for the permit, which is valid for two years, nor are there specific qualifying criteria beyond those already in force through existing State and Federal permit requirements.

Enclosed is a partially completed application for the HMS permit. Please review the application, make any needed changes or additions, and mail the completed application to the NMFS Southwest Region Permit Office in the envelope provided. If you no longer own the vessel in question, please note that fact on the form and return it. Please be sure to attach first class postage to the envelope. Once your application has been verified as complete, a permit will be issued with endorsement for specific HMS gear(s) and mailed to the owner of the vessel. The permit must be maintained onboard the vessel.

Persons who have not received an application form within 60 days of the effective date of the *Federal Register* notice discussed in the first paragraph of this memo will need to contact the NMFS, Southwest Region Permit Office to apply for a permit.



To submit a permit application, obtain a permit application form, or for further information regarding permits contact:

National Marine Fisheries Service
Southwest Region Permit Office
P. O. Box 32469
Long Beach, California, 90832-2469
Ph: (562) 980-4032
Fax: (562) 980-4047
<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>

Note: The public reporting burden for this collection of information includes time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the above address. Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.