NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT ON HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES (HMS) MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Final rule to implement Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) Resolutions

On July 7, 2026, NOAA Fisheries published a final rule in the Federal Register (91 FR 41570) to issue regulations under the Tuna Conventions Act of 1950, as amended, to implement provisions in IATTC Resolutions C-25-01 (*Conservation Measures for Tropical Tunas in the Eastern Pacific Ocean During 2026 and 2027-2028*) and C-25-07 (*Amends and Replaces Resolution C-24-06 on Fish-Aggregating Devices*). The final rule also implements several provisions of Resolution C-19-04 (*Resolution to Mitigate Impacts on Sea Turtles*) that were not previously implemented. The management measures in this rule apply to fishing vessels targeting tropical tuna (i.e., bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*), yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), and skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*)) in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

The final rule maintains and extends fishing management measures for tropical tuna stocks in the IATTC Convention Area. These include purse seine time and area closures, fish aggregating device (FAD) measures, requirements to stow gear during closures, requirements that all tropical tuna be retained on board and landed (with certain exceptions), and longline catch limits for bigeye tuna. The rulemaking reduces purse seine closure days from 72 to 64 and includes a provision for large U.S. purse seiners to pay a one-time assessed contribution no later than June 30, 2026, to fund a tuna tagging project needed to complete the next skipjack tuna stock assessment. Other provisions help facilitate FAD recovery efforts by requiring location data for FADs drifting in certain areas be shared with entities engaged in FAD recovery.

Ring Tackle Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP)

On July 13, 2026, NMFS issued three EFPs allowing up to three vessels to target swordfish and other HMS with deep-set buoy gear (DSBG) using ring tackle. These EFPs were endorsed by the Council at its March 2026 meeting. The EFPs include the same operational protocols as authorized DSBG, except that monofilament rings can be substituted for baited hooks, and two hooks and two sets of rings can be tested on each piece of linked gear. Each vessel is allowed to fish up to 80 days per year using ring tackle. These EFPs will be effective through March 31, 2028, unless terminated or modified at an earlier date by NMFS.