

Science, Service, Stewardship



Gear Authorization for Atlantic Tunas & Sea Turtle Control Device

Highly Migratory Species Management
Division

Public Hearings - May/June 2008

**NOAA
FISHERIES
SERVICE**

NOAA



Green-Stick and Harpoon Authorization

- Public requests for authorization led NMFS to analyze and consider use of the gears.
- NMFS determined that use of these gears would allow efficient harvest of Atlantic tunas with low bycatch and bycatch mortality.
- The purpose is to provide additional opportunities for harvest within existing quotas, size limits, or other established limitations.

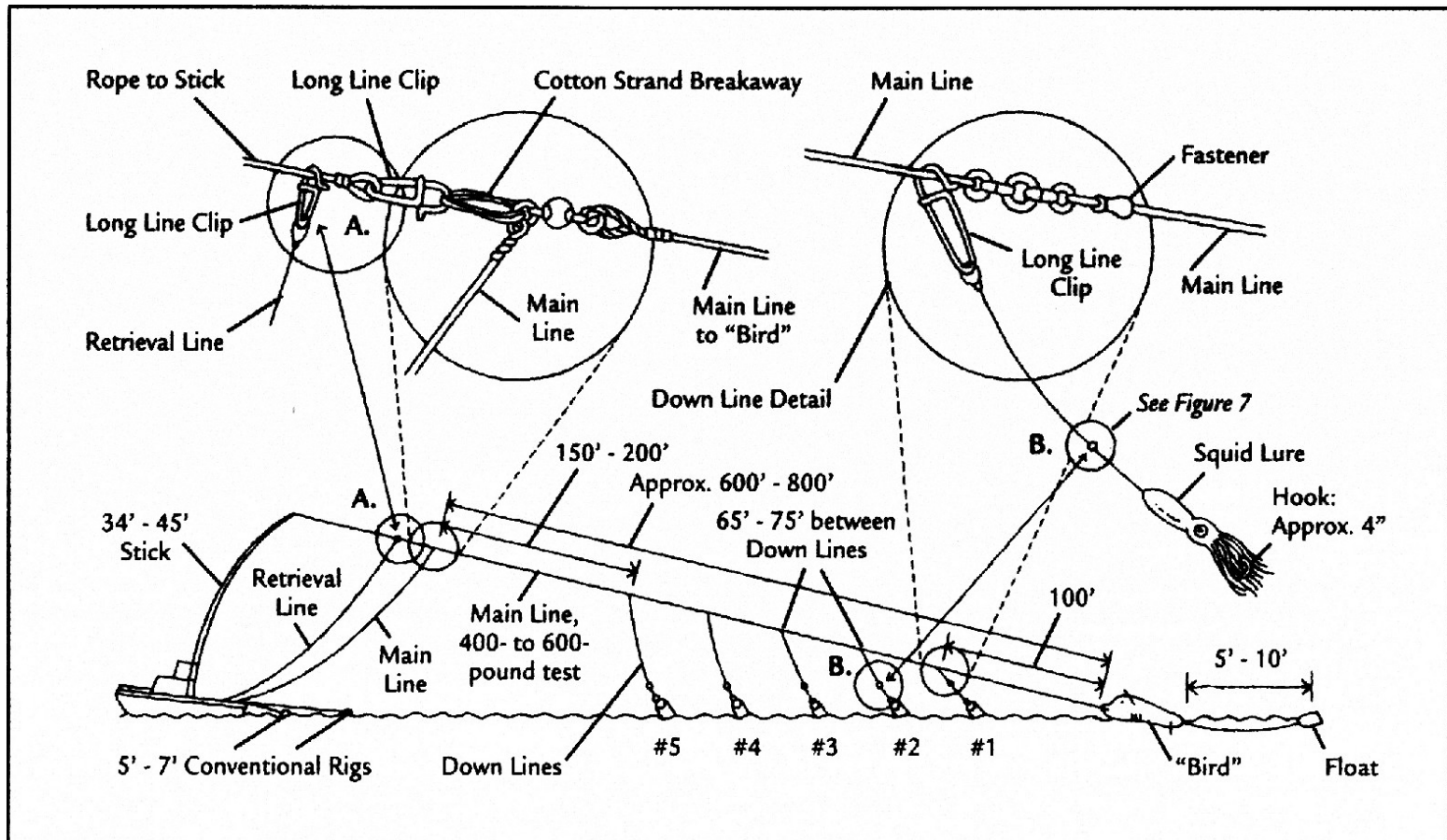


Green-Stick Gear

- Used for Atlantic tunas since at least the mid-1990s, but not separately authorized.
- Logbook records show commercial catches continued with green-stick gear.
- 2006 FMP clarification of green-stick gear use did not well suit the fishing methods and locations preferred by fishermen.
- Intent of this proposed action is to define and authorize green-stick gear for the harvest of Atlantic Tunas.



Green-Stick Gear





Green-Stick Gear

Atlantic commercial green-stick gear catch reported via NMFS coastal logbooks, 1999-2007 (number of trips = 98).

Species	Total Weight (lbs)	%
Yellowfin Tuna	66,325	83
Bigeye Tuna	7,833	10
Bluefin Tuna (unclassified)	1,838	2
Little Tunny	1,610	2
Other (12 species or species groups)	2,385	3



Green-Stick Gear

Atlantic commercial green-stick gear catch reported via NMFS PLL logbooks, 1999-2002 (number of sets = 54).

Species	Number of Fish	%
Yellowfin Tuna	678	82
Dolphin	57	7
Other BAYS Tunas	54	7
Other (6 species or species groups)	39	4



Green-Stick Gear Definition

- Actively trolled mainline attached to a vessel and suspended above the surface of the water
- No more than 10 hooks or gangions
- Retrieved by hand or mechanical means
- Not a pelagic or bottom longline



Green-Stick Gear Definition

“Green-stick gear means an actively trolled mainline attached to a vessel and elevated or suspended above the surface of the water with no more than 10 hooks or gangions attached to the mainline. The suspended line, attached gangions and/or hooks, and catch may be retrieved collectively by hand or mechanical means. Green-stick does not constitute a pelagic longline or a bottom longline as defined in this section or as described at § 635.21(c) or § 635.21(d), respectively.”



Green-Stick Gear Authorization

Alternative A1: No action/status quo.

Alternative A2: Authorize green-stick gear for harvest of Atlantic tunas by Atlantic Tunas General category permitted vessels. (**Preferred Alternative**)



Green-Stick Gear Authorization

Alternative A3: Authorize green-stick gear for harvest of Atlantic tunas by HMS Charter/Headboat permitted vessels. (**Preferred Alternative**)



Green-Stick Gear Authorization

Alternative A4: Authorize green-stick gear for harvest of Atlantic BAYS tunas, and BFT within existing target catch requirements, by Atlantic Tunas Longline category permitted vessels. (**Preferred Alternative**)



Green-Stick Gear Authorization

Number of permitted vessels for which green-stick gear
would be authorized:

Atlantic Tunas General Category	3,616
HMS Charter/Headboat	3,901
Atlantic Tunas Longline	218



Green-Stick Gear Data

NMFS considered green-stick gear data collection; however, there are no proposals. We want your input...

- Observers
- Vessel Logbooks
- Trip Tickets/Dealer Reporting
- Special Studies



Harpoon Authorization

Harpoons currently used for commercial harvest of Atlantic BFT in Atlantic Tunas General and Harpoon Categories.

Intent of Proposed Action:

- Flexibility and efficiency in harvesting bluefin tuna.
- Regulatory Consistency re: authorized handgear used historically for commercial harvest of bluefin tuna.
- Increase opportunities to attain General category quota.



Harpoon Authorization

Alternative B1: (No action/status quo)

Alternative B2: Authorize harpoon for Atlantic tunas fishing by HMS CHB permitted vessels. (**Preferred Alternative**)



Harpoon Authorization

Alternative B2a: Authorize harpoon for Atlantic tunas fishing by HMS CHB permitted vessels on all trips.

Alternative B2b: Authorize harpoon for Atlantic tunas fishing by HMS CHB permitted vessels on non-for-hire trips only. (**Preferred Alternative**)



Harpoon Use by Charter/Headboat Vessels

Atlantic HMS CHB permitted vessels = 3,901

In area of historical harpoon use for BFT:

Maine	91
New Hampshire	53
Massachusetts	644
Rhode Island	159



Sea Turtle Control Device

2004 Biological Opinion (BiOp) on the Atlantic PLL Fishery

- Jeopardy for leatherback sea turtles.

Sea Turtle Bycatch Mitigation Measures for PLL and BLL:

- Safe Handling and Release Gears
- Safe Handling and Release Workshops

Further testing and analysis by NMFS indicate that a sea turtle control device should be required.

- Improve removal of hooks and entangling gear.
- Improved safety at sea.



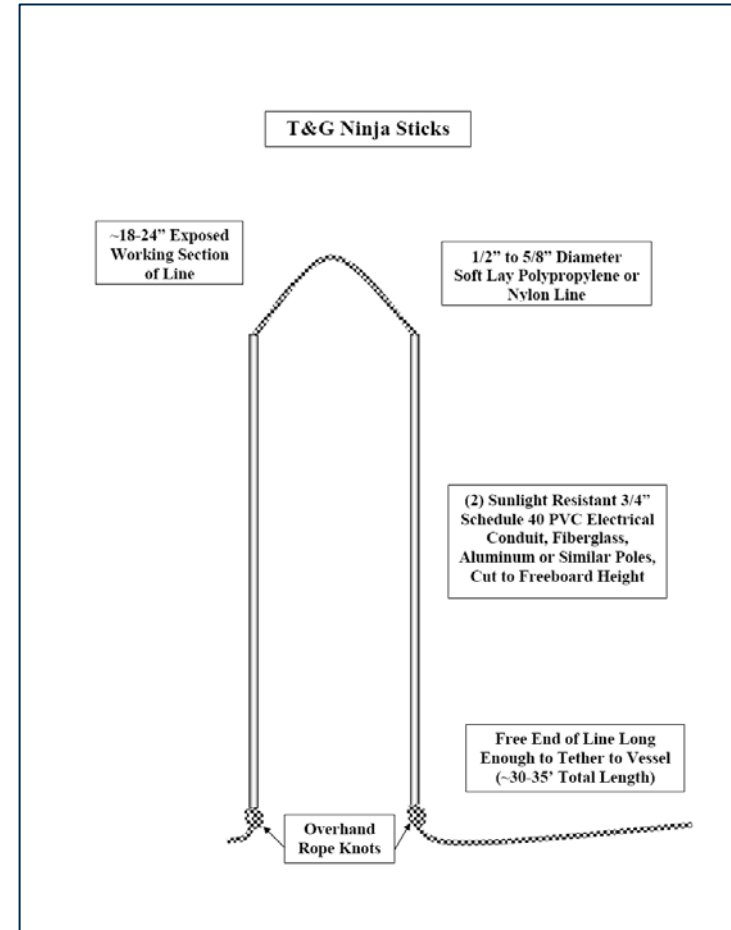
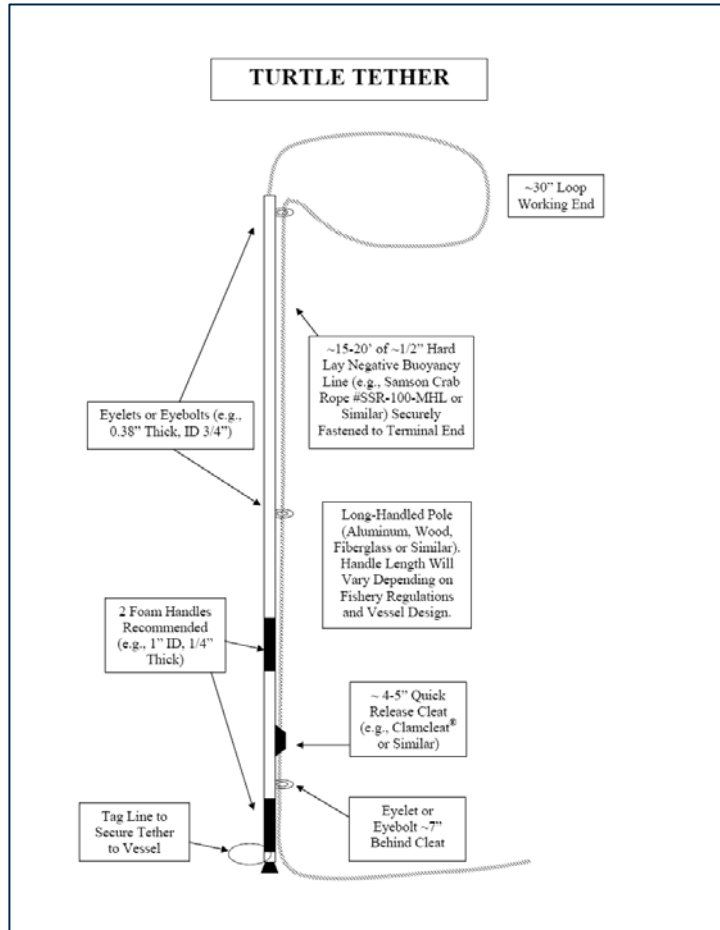
Sea Turtle Control Device

Alternative C1: (No action/status quo)

Alternative C2: Require possession and use of a sea turtle control device as an addition to the already existing requirements for sea turtle bycatch mitigation gear.
(Preferred Alternative)



Sea Turtle Control Device





Sea Turtle Control Device

Maximum Number of permitted vessels affected:

Shark Directed and Incidental	525
Atlantic Tunas Longline	<u>218</u>
Total =	743

Cost of Sea Turtle Control Device:

	Construction Cost	Retail Cost
Turtle Tether	\$40	\$250
Ninja Sticks	\$25	\$175



Timeline for Rulemaking

Proposed rule published **May 6, 2008.**

Public comment period ends **June 16, 2008.**

Public Hearings:	St. Petersburg, FL	May 27
	Manteo, NC	May 29
	Manahawkin, NJ	June 2
	Gloucester, MA	June 4
	Belle Chasse, LA	June 4
	Orlando, FL	June 12

Final Rule Expected: Late Summer 2008



Public Comments

Please identify comments with "**0648-AV92**"

Federal eRulemaking Portal - <http://www.regulations.gov>

Fax: 727-824-5398

Mail: Randy Blankinship, Highly Migratory Species
Management Division, National Marine Fisheries
Service, 263 13th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg,
FL 33701