



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Duane Harris, Chairman
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Robert K. Mahood, Executive Director
Gregg T. Waugh, Deputy Executive Director

August 18, 2009

Ms. Margo Schulze-Haugen, Director
Highly Migratory Species Management Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Schulze-Haugen:

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council continues to be concerned about the swordfish pelagic longline research project operating under an exempted fisheries permit in the South Atlantic. As you are aware, the Council opposed issuing the original exempted fisheries permit and later opposed the extension of the permit.

At our December 2008 meeting Chris Rilling briefed the Council on data collected (to that point) in the swordfish exempted permit fishery. Data included the catch in 13 sets which showed:

Total Swordfish Catch

178	(60%)	Swordfish >47 inches
121	(40%)	Undersized Juvenile Swordfish (<47 inches)
62 of 121	(51%)	undersized released dead

Bycatch:

6 marlin	in 13 sets or approximately 1 marlin bycatch every 2 sets
2 leatherbacks	in 13 sets or approximately 1 leatherback bycatch every 6 sets

The Council believed this to verify that the Charleston Bump is a swordfish nursery area, and based on that and the high levels of bycatch, recommended the exempted fisheries permit not be extended (December 11, 2008 letter). However, the permit was extended.

Also, in the December 11 letter the Council requested that we be kept informed about this research project. To date we have not received any further information. On behalf of the Council, I am requesting we be provided an update on the swordfish exempted permit fishery similar to that presented by Chris Rilling in December 2008. Further we would like to receive quarterly reports as long as the fishery is still being conducted.

Letter-Harris to Schulze-Haugen

If you are able to honor our request, please contact Bob Mahood to arrange time on our September 17-18 Council agenda. Jackie Wilson is already scheduled to be on our agenda to present draft Amendment 3 to the Consolidated Highly Migratory Species FMP (and the proposed rule) to the Council. Perhaps she or Chris could present the update on the swordfish exempted permit fishery at that time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Duane Harris
Chairman

cc: Council Members and Staff
Bonnie Ponwith (SEFSC)
Monica Smit-Brunello
Phil Steele
Jackie Wilson & Chris Rilling (HMS)