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# **Gear Considerations in Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fisheries**

Scoping, May - July, 2024

# Overview

- Background
- Potential options
- Feedback and discussion
- **Presentation goal - to gather your input!**



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# List of Acronyms

|      |  |
|------|--|
| BAYS | Bigeye, Albacore, Yellowfin, and Skipjack tuna |
| CCSB | Commercial Caribbean Small Boat                |
| HMS  | Highly Migratory Species                       |
| LAP  | Limited Access Permit                          |
| NMFS | National Marine Fisheries Service              |
| PLL  | Pelagic Longline                               |
| VMS  | Vessel Monitoring System                       |



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# Need for action

- Over the years, NMFS has implemented a number of measures related to fishing gears
- These fishing gear restrictions are meant to achieve fishery management and conservation goals
- HMS fishing gear and techniques have evolved over time
- We want to review some of these restrictions to see if they are limiting fishing opportunities or the ability to achieve optimum yield
- We have received requests for gear-related changes, e.g., deep-set PLL, power assistance for buoy gear, and commercial authorization of speargun use for BAYS



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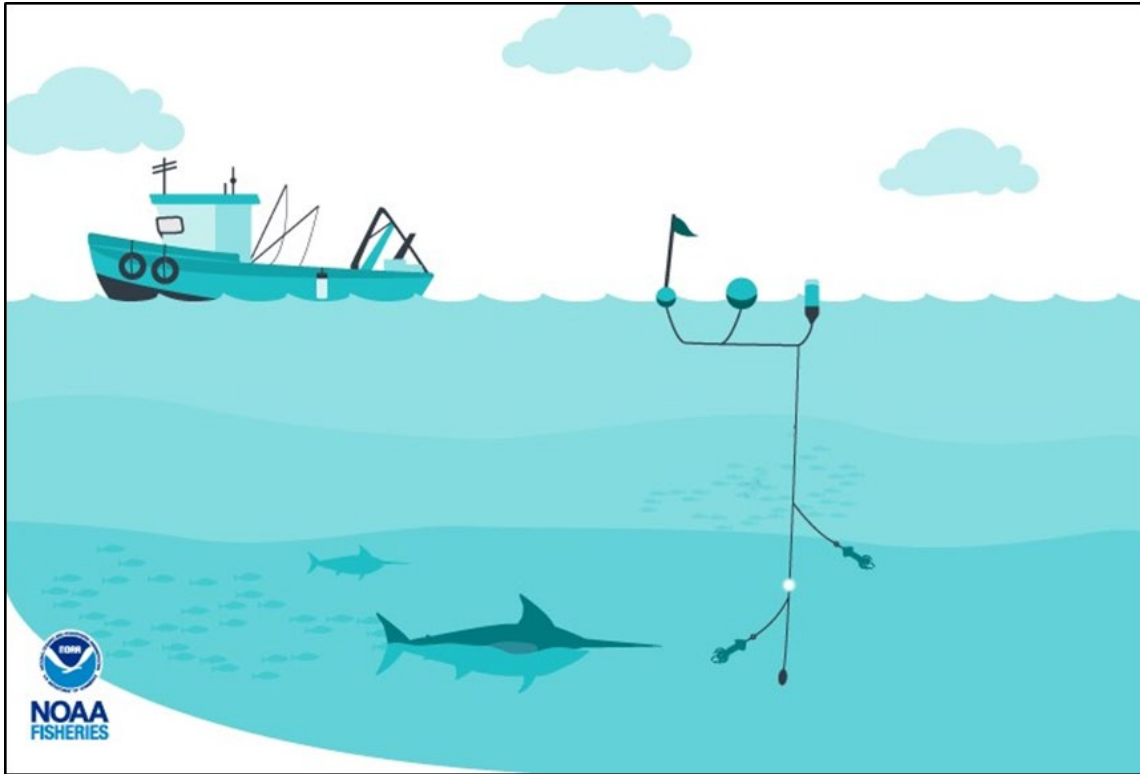
# Objectives

- Increase flexibility for targeting HMS while maintaining consistency with management and conservation goals, domestic fishery regulations, and international agreements
- Consider regulatory changes to facilitate fishing for swordfish deeper in the water column
  - Data collection from other swordfish fisheries: high target, lower bycatch rates
- Reduce interference between newer and more established fishing gear configurations and techniques
- Consider additional authorizations (more species with certain gears, gears and permit combinations)
- Address gear regulation inconsistencies across HMS and non-HMS fisheries



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# Buoy Gear Background



Typical U.S. buoy gear

- Authorized under certain permits
  - Swordfish only
    - Swordfish Handgear LAP
    - Swordfish Directed LAP (along with an Atlantic Tunas Longline permit and a Shark Directed or Shark Incidental LAP)
  - CCSB (valid only in U.S. Caribbean)
    - Swordfish, BAYS
- Generally used at night; must be released and retrieved by hand
- Lower dead discard rates vs. PLL
- Increasingly deep-set during the day, achieving high swordfish selectivity

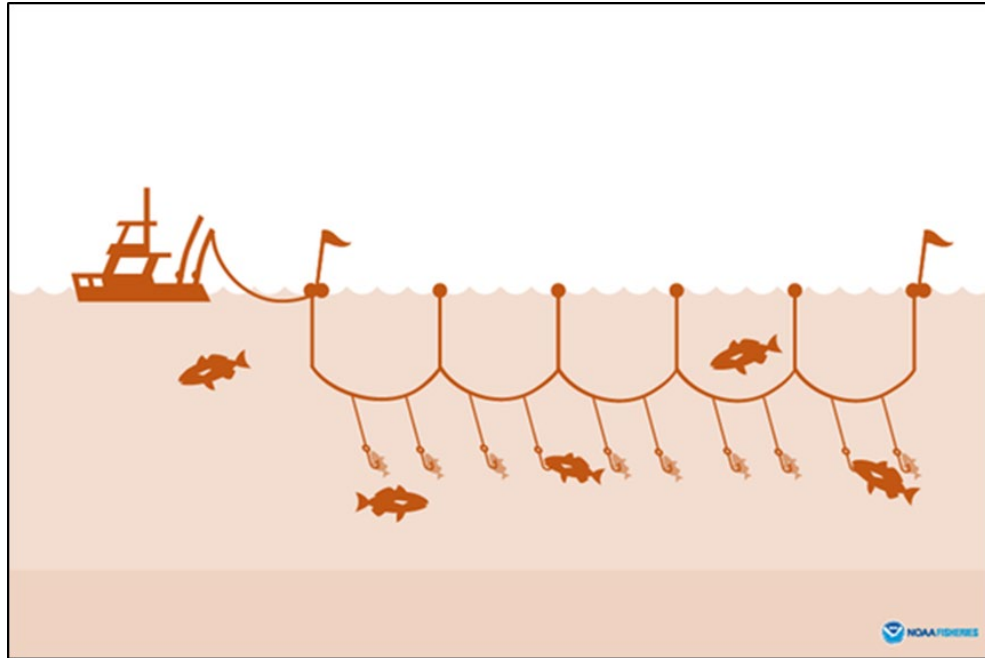
# Buoy Gear Options

- A1: No changes - maintain current regulations
- A2: Authorize the use of power assistance for buoy gear (e.g., hydraulic, electric)
- A3: Authorize the use of buoy gear for Swordfish General Commercial permit holders
- A4: Allow the retention of BAYS tunas with buoy gear in all areas, except in the Florida Swordfish Management Area
- A5: Allow the retention of some shark species with buoy gear
- A6: Require circle hooks on buoy gear

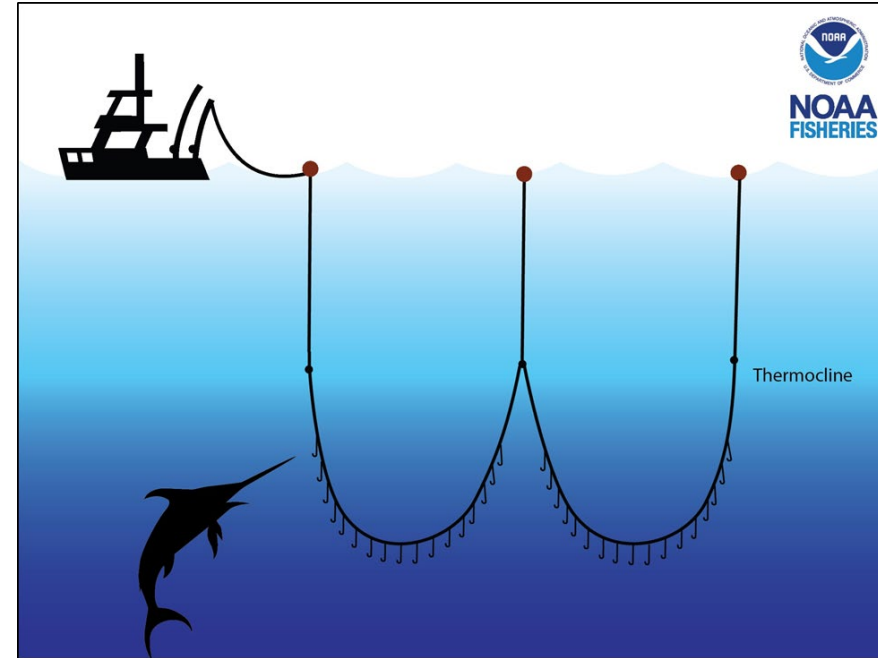


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# Pelagic Longline (PLL) Background



Typical U.S. pelagic longline gear



Example of deep-set pelagic longline gear

- Generally, PLL deployed at sunset and hauled at sunrise
- Technique changing in recent years
- Deep-set technique consistent with PLL definition, but two different techniques



# Deep-Set PLL Options

- B1: No changes - keep the current definition and regulations for PLL
- B2: Modify the PLL gear definition to clarify the recent deployment of the gear in deep sets
- B3: Require enhanced communication when deploying deep-set PLL
- B4: Require intent to deep set during VMS hail-out



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# Bait Collection Net Restrictions Background and Options

- Commonly carried on board but not explicitly authorized in HMS regulations, not considered a secondary gear
- Options
  - C1: No changes - maintain current regulations that do not authorize bait collection nets on HMS fishing vessels
  - C2: Modify regulations to allow small nets for bait collection on HMS fishing vessels



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# Speargun Background

- Speargun use authorized in 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP
- Targeting HMS with spearguns authorized only in recreational and charter/headboat BAYS tuna fisheries
- Not authorized for targeting other HMS or in commercial HMS fisheries



# Speargun Options

- D1: No changes - keep current regulations regarding the usage of spearguns
- D2: Authorize speargun use for HMS Angling or HMS Charter/Headboat permit holders fishing for swordfish
- D3: Authorize speargun use for HMS Angling or HMS Charter/Headboat permit holders fishing for sharks authorized for retention by recreational fishermen
- D4: Authorize speargun use for some HMS commercial permit holders fishing for swordfish, BAYS tunas, and sharks authorized for retention by their commercial permit



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# Discussion, Q&A, Feedback, Ideas

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