



International Game Fish Association

Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

300 Gulf Stream Way, Dania Beach, Florida, 33004 U.S.A.

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Tom Warren
HMS Management Division, F/SF1
Office of Sustainable Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

RE: Amendment 7 Scoping - Management Recommendations for the U.S. Surface Longline Fishery

Dear Mr. Warren:

The undersigned sport fishing and conservation organizations represent millions of American recreational anglers and the businesses that depend on sport fishing. We offer our collective comments on the scoping document for Amendment 7 to the Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. Incidental catch (bycatch) by surface longlines has a significant negative impact on Atlantic bluefin tuna and we appreciate the inclusion of management options in the scoping document aimed at mitigating this impact in U.S. waters of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean.

In the Gulf of Mexico, we urge NMFS to promote the transition from surface longlines to more selective gears and prohibit the use of surface longline fishing year-round. NMFS should implement these measures in tandem to ensure the long-term protection of spawning western Atlantic bluefin tuna, while allowing fishermen continued access to yellowfin tuna and swordfish.

In the Atlantic, NMFS should implement an enforceable annual bluefin bycatch cap and associated measures to ensure that incidental bluefin mortality does not exceed the current surface longline category share of 8.1% of the U.S. bluefin quota. These measures should be accompanied by industry-funded enhanced observer coverage and real-time reporting through existing Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) devices, mandatory retention of legal size bluefin, and elimination of requirements that link the number of bluefin that can be retained to the amount of target catch. These measures will allow for timely closure of the fishery once the bycatch cap is reached and will significantly reduce bluefin dead discards.

The undersigned groups, as well as the nation's recreational fishermen and sport fishing businesses, urge you to ensure these management measures are included in the Amendment 7 final rule.

Sincerely,

Jason Schratwieser
Conservation Director
International Game Fish Association

The International Game Fish Association is a not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making and record keeping.

Email: HQ@igfa.org • Website: www.igfa.org



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