



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**



# Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to Evaluate Pelagic Longline (PLL) Catch Rates in a Portion of the East Florida Coast PLL Closed Area

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species  
Management Division

September 6, 2017

# Current Status of HMS PLL Fishery

- Overall decline in number of “active” PLL vessels\*
  - **From 200 vessels (1999) to 104 vessels (2015)**
- Overall decline in number of PLL hooks fished
  - **From 7.6 mil. hooks (2001) to 5.8 mil. hooks (2015)**
- Persistent under-harvest of U.S. North Atlantic swordfish quota
  - **In 2016, approximately 39% of the base and 34% of the adjusted U.S. swordfish quota was harvested**
- Change in status of several species
  - **North Atlantic swordfish fully rebuilt (2009)**
  - **Western bluefin tuna no longer experiencing overfishing (2014)**
  - **North Atlantic albacore rebuilt (2016)**
  - **Sailfish no longer experiencing overfishing (2016)**

\* “Active” refers to vessels that landed at least one swordfish in 2015

# Summary of the EFP Application

- Purpose –
  - Evaluate PLL catch and bycatch rates within the EFC PLL Closed Area and compare those to rates from an open area
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing area closure at meeting current conservation and management goals
- Requested authorizing 6 vessels (with 7 “backup” vessels)
  - All vessels associated with Dayboat Seafood, LLC
- Project requested for 12 months and, pending annual review, consider authorization for two additional 12-month periods
- All fish legally caught and otherwise authorized for retention and sale could be sold
- Complete application received Nov 6, 2016

# Draft Environmental Assessment & Public Comment

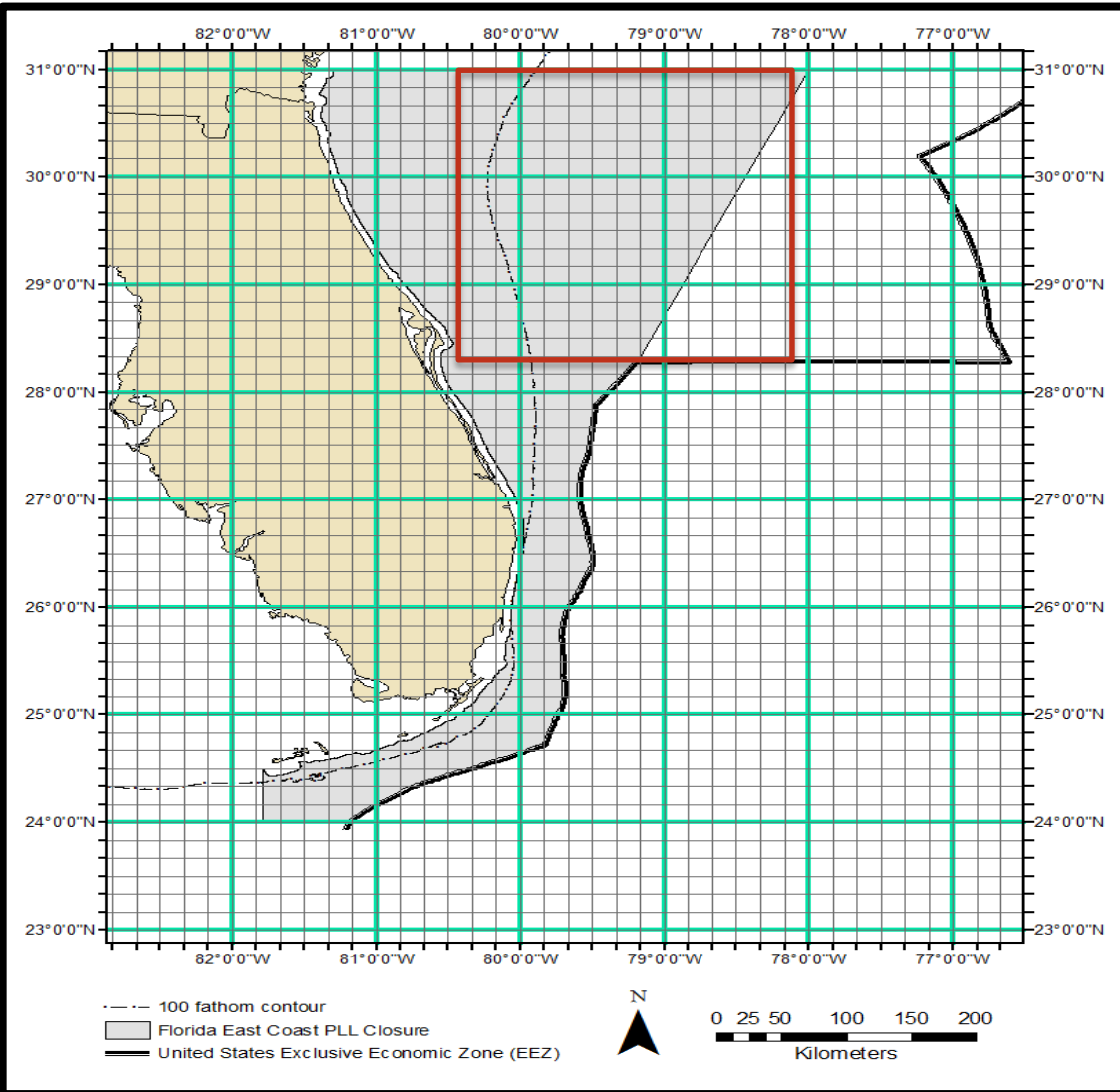
- NMFS determined that the EFP application warranted additional consideration and opportunity for public comment
  - Draft Environmental Assessment released on Jan 13, 2017; comment period closed on March 29, 2017
    - South Atlantic Fishery Management Council presentation on March 9, 2017
    - Public Webinar on March 27, 2017
  - 3 alternatives analyzed

# Alternative 1

**No Action** - Do not issue an EFP to conduct research with PLL vessels in EFC PLL Closed Area

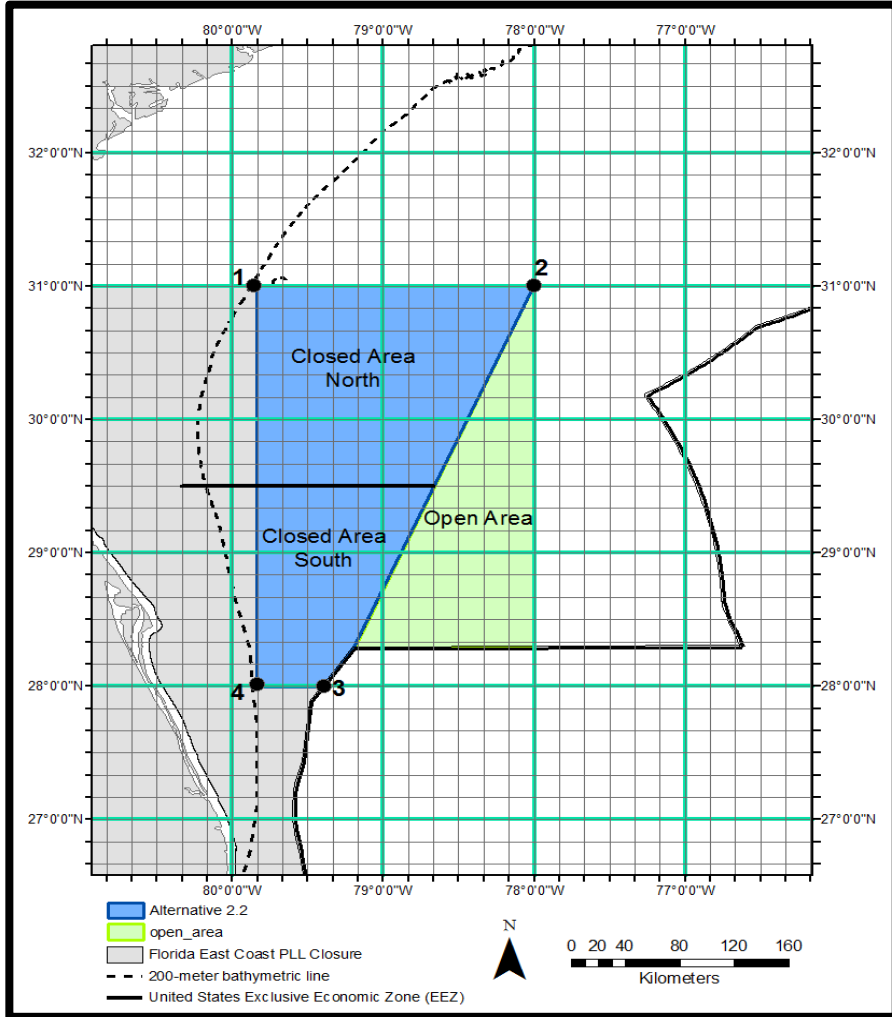
EFC PLL Closed Area (in grey) would remain closed in its entirety

Red box denotes general area of EFP research as described in Alternatives 2 and 3 in next slides

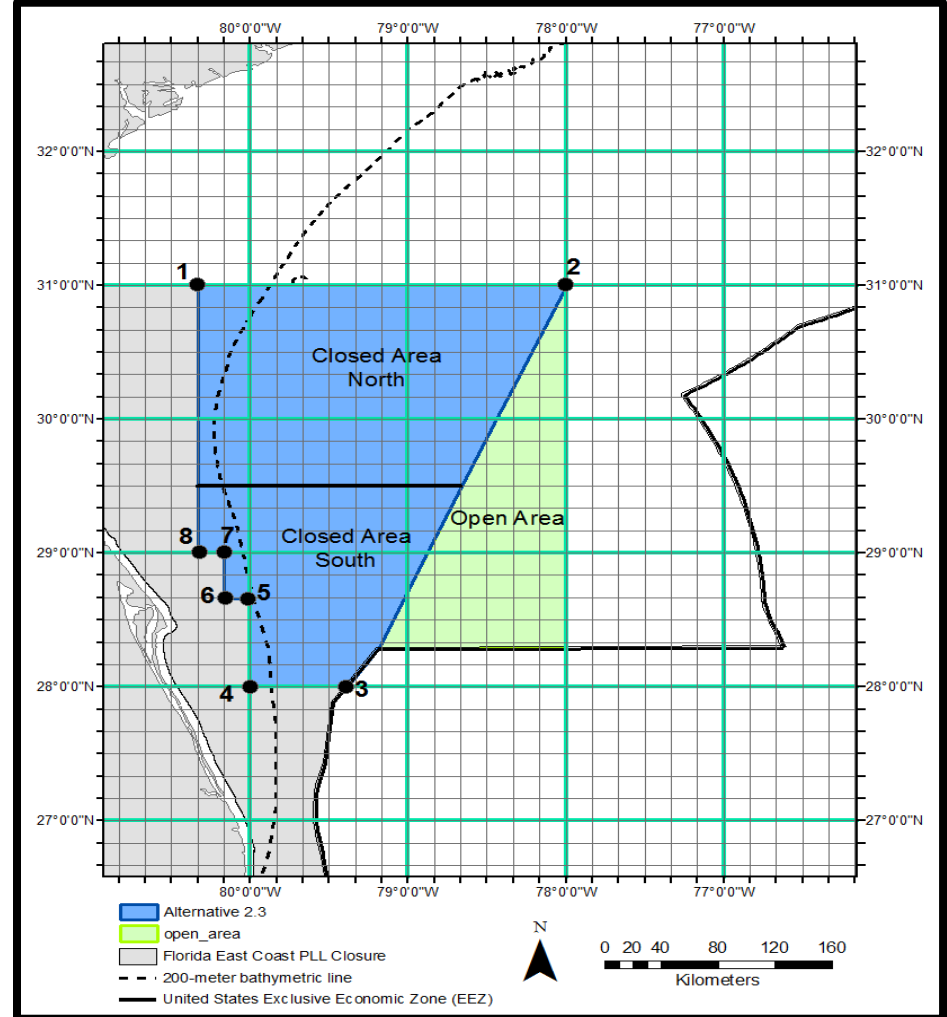


# Alternatives 2 and 3

## Alternative 2



## Alternative 3 (preferred)



# Analysis of Projected Catches

- Projected catches used catch per unit effort (CPUE) rates from the 2008 – 2010 research project for fishing activities inside the Closed Area, and CPUE rates from 2013 – 2015 observer data for fishing activities outside the EFC PLL Closed Area
  - EFP = two closed areas + one open area
  - No EFP = all effort in open area
- The two CPUE rates were then multiplied by:
  - Fishing effort *requested in EFP application* (1,080 sets/year with 750 hooks per set)
  - *Historical fishing effort* of participating vessels (720 sets/year with 600 hooks per set)

Species	Alternative 2 with 1,080 sets (# of fish), comparing against all effort in open area			Preferred Alternative 3 with 720 sets (# of fish), comparing against all effort in open area		
	Kept	Dead	Discarded Alive	Kept	Dead	Discarded Alive
Swordfish	8,954	1,833	833	4,776	977	444
Bluefin Tuna	-38	-74	-55	-20	-39	-29
Yellowfin Tuna	-1,572	-11	-56	-838	-6	-30
Bigeye Tuna	-2,366	-329	-349	-1,262	-175	-186
Albacore Tuna	-1,583	-99	-20	-844	-53	-11
Unld. Billfish (no commercial retention)	0	-45	-135	0	-24	-72
Blue Marlin (no commercial retention)	0	12	-38	0	6	-20
White Marlin (no commercial retention)	0	-48	42	0	-26	23
Sailfish (no commercial retention)	0	424	1,208	0	226	644
Spearfish (no commercial retention)	0	-90	-38	0	-48	-20
Dolphin	-590	-69	-24	-315	-37	-13
Mako Shark	9	-1	12	5	-1	6
Oceanic Whitetip Shark (prohibited by PLL vessels)	0	33	163	0	18	87
Dusky Shark (prohibited)	0	-7	126	0	-4	67
Sandbar Shark (no retention)	0	-2	80	0	-1	43
Silky Shark (prohibited by PLL vessels)	0	1,347	1,611	0	718	859
Night Shark (prohibited)	0	619	628	0	330	335
Hammerhead Shark (prohibited by PLL vessels)	0	55	138	0	29	74
Leatherback Turtle	0	0	-10	0	0	-5
Loggerhead Turtle	0	0	-39	0	0	-21



# Summary of Ecological Impacts

- Catches (fish kept or discarded dead) of tunas (all species), white marlin, dolphin, and sea turtles are projected to either decline or remain the same
- Swordfish kept, discarded dead, and discarded alive are projected to increase, but remain within U.S. swordfish quota and stock assessment parameters (*e.g.*, with regard to undersized fish)
- Sailfish discards projected to increase, but increase is small and not expected to lead to overfishing
- Discards of dusky, silky, and night sharks are uncertain, but projected to increase, so precautionary terms and conditions are included in the EFP

# Summary of Socio-Economic Impacts

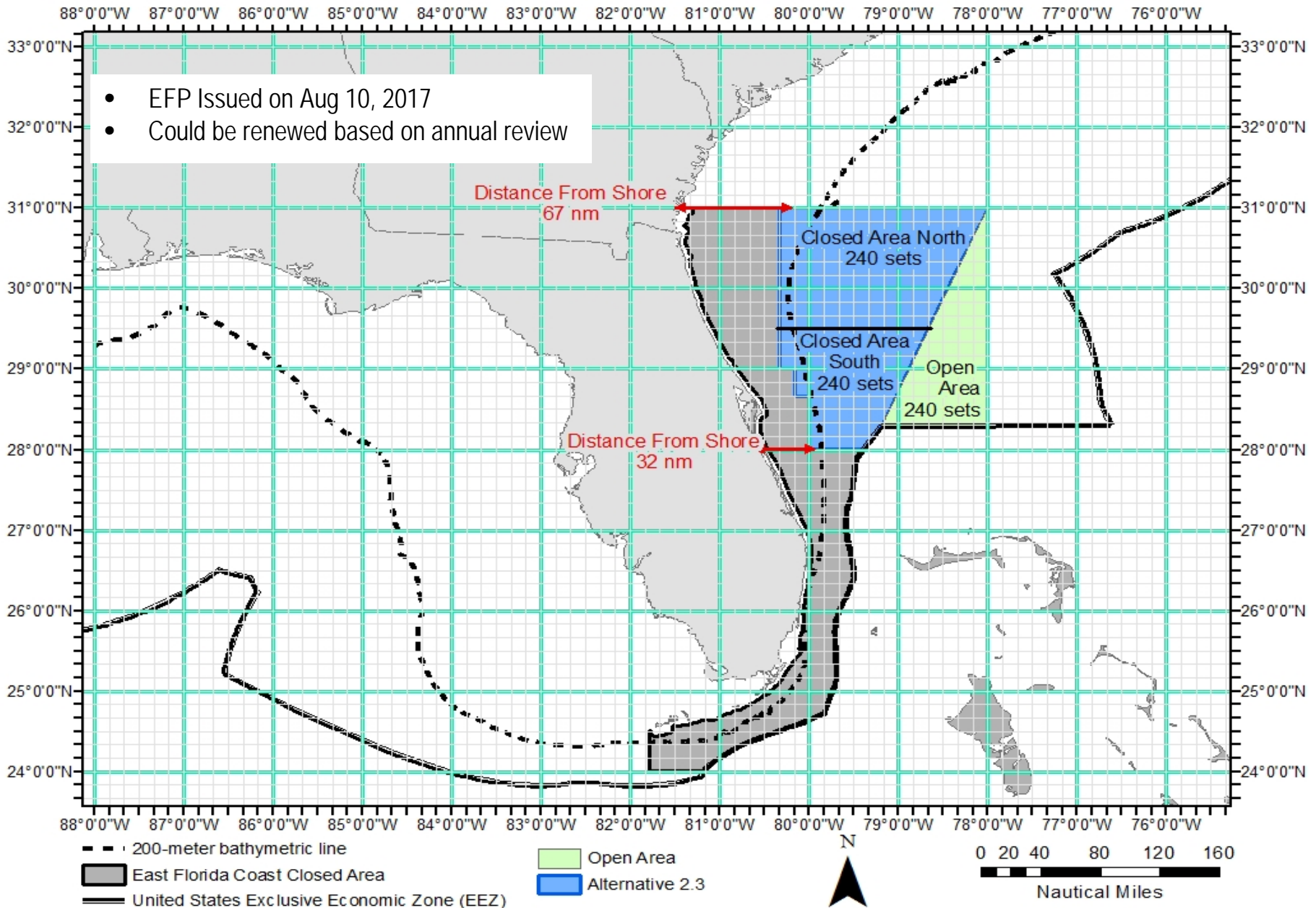
- Benefits for participating vessels = increased swordfish landings, lower fuel, food, & ice costs (shorter trips)
- Adverse impacts to recreational fishing community = potential gear conflicts & reduced catches of HMS/other species
- Potential adverse impacts to other commercial PLL vessels not participating = increased swordfish supply and possible decrease in ex-vessel prices
- Long-term benefits = scientifically valid catch rate data between closed and open areas, real-time electronic logbook reporting, enhanced electronic video review, and improved biological information on shark species and other species

# Summary of Public Comments on Draft EA

- Over 500 comments received – most were opposed to issuance of the EFP
- Comments opposed expressed concerns about bycatch (e.g., undersized swordfish, billfish, dusky sharks, white sharks, sea turtles)
- Comments in support were in favor of collecting current catch information from the area, increased swordfish landings, and obtaining information on electronic logbooks to facilitate real-time reporting



# Issuance of EFP & Publication of Final EA



# Requested vs. Authorized

Requested in the EFP Application	Authorized in the Issued EFP
Up to 1,080 sets/year (180 sets/year/vessel)	Up to 720 sets/year (120 sets/year/vessel) <i>*based on historical effort of the 6 vessels</i>
750 hooks per set	600 hooks per set
33% of all sets would have observer coverage	40% of all sets would have observer coverage
None	Shark-specific terms & conditions (next slide)
6 vessels (with 7 "backup" vessels)	6 vessels (with 6 "backup" vessels)
Electronic logbook submission for all trips and review of Dayboat EM system	Electronic logbook submission for all trips and 100% NMFS review of all Dayboat EM footage
All other PLL regulations apply (100% logbooks, regular observer coverage, size limits, seasons, gear/bait requirements, IBQs, GRAs, workshops, etc)	All other PLL regulations apply (100% logbooks, regular observer coverage, size limits, seasons, gear/bait requirements, IBQs, GRAs, workshops, etc)

# Shark-Specific EFP Terms and Conditions

- Positive Shark ID - Fin clips and photographs of all live sharks not being retained to be reviewed by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center
- Biological samples (e.g., vertebra, reproductive organs, and stomachs) would be taken from all sharks dead at haul back (including prohibited species) or legally retained for sale, and sent to the SEFSC
- Hook timers to determine when fish captured and mortality occurs
- If three dusky sharks are caught dead at haulback by a vessel, a maximum PLL set soak time limit of ten hours is established for vessel
- If three additional dusky sharks are caught dead at haulback, then that vessel (or its replacement) could not make another trip inside EFC PLL Closed Area for remainder of 12-month project period

# QUESTIONS or COMMENTS?

Thank You!

Final EA, Federal Register Notice, and Listserv  
are available at:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/efp/index.html>

