Compliance Guide
Fishing Effort Limits in Purse Seine Fisheries for 2015

May 2015

This guide provides information on how owners and operators of U.S. purse seine vessels can comply with specific fishing effort limits when operating in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has issued regulations to implement a decision of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC). The area of application of the WCPFC (or Convention Area) comprises the majority of the WCPO. The regulations include limits on fishing effort in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and on the high seas for 2015. The regulations were published in the Federal Register as an interim rule on May 21, 2015, and became effective on that date. The regulations will be included in the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR Part 300, Subpart O. The interim rule (and subsequent final rule, if issued by NMFS) and supporting documents, are available on the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal, at www.regulations.gov (search for Docket ID NOAA-NMFS-2015-0058).

Any discrepancy between the contents of this guide and regulations will be resolved in favor of regulations published in the Federal Register and codified in the Code of Federal Regulations.
Area of Effect

The requirements described in this guide apply to the Convention Area. Figure 1 depicts the Convention Area.

Figure 1. The Convention Area: high seas (white); U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (dark gray); and foreign claimed maritime jurisdictions (light gray).
Explanation of the Regulations

The limit on the total number of days that U.S. purse seine vessels are allowed to fish in the Convention Area, within the area between 20° N. and 20° S. latitude on the high seas and in the U.S. EEZ (an area called the ELAPS or Effort Limit Area for Purse Seine), in calendar year 2015, is **1,828 fishing days**. Figure 2, below, shows the ELAPS.

Figure 2. ELAPS. The ELAPS does not include territorial seas.
Key Questions and Answers:

Question 1: To which vessels, exactly, do the limits apply?
Answer: The limits apply to fishing vessels of the United States equipped with purse seine gear.

Question 2: What is the definition of a fishing day?
Answer: “Fishing day” means any day in which a U.S. fishing vessel equipped with purse seine gear searches for fish, deploys a FAD, services a FAD, or sets a purse seine, with the exception of setting a purse seine solely for the purpose of testing or cleaning the gear and resulting in no catch.

Question 3: When do fishing days start being counted against the limit – in other words, when does the “limit period” start? And when does it end?
Answer: The limit period for 2015 begins at the start of the calendar year and ends at the end of the calendar year. For example, the limit period for 2015 begins at 00:00 on January 1, 2015, Universal Coordinated Time (UTC), and ends at 24:00 on December 31, 2015, UTC.

Question 4: How will I know when the limit in 2015 is reached?
Answer: NMFS will monitor the number of fishing days using information collected in vessel logbooks and other available sources. If and when NMFS determines that the limit will be reached on a specific future date, NMFS will issue a notice in the Federal Register announcing that the purse seine fishery will be closed from that specific future date until the end of calendar year 2015. The notice will be published at least seven calendar days before the start of the closure.

Question 5: What are the consequences of a limit being reached, and how long will they be in effect? In other words, exactly what will be prohibited?
Answer: Starting on the first day of the fishery closure, as announced in the Federal Register notice, fishing vessels of the United States equipped with purse seine gear may not be used to fish on the high seas or in the U.S. EEZ in the Convention Area between 20° N. and 20° S. latitude (i.e., in the ELAPS). This prohibition will be in effect through the end of the calendar year.