UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Announces that Reimbursement Funds Are Available for Enhanced Mobile Transmitting Unit (E-MTU) Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) in Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fisheries

The National VMS Program announces that Atlantic HMS fisheries are now authorized for the VMS reimbursement funding. Reimbursement is available for approved E-MTU devices purchased in order to comply with fishery regulations developed in accordance with 16 U.S.C 1801. The reimbursement is limited to $3,100 per unit and can only be applied towards the purchase of a new E-MTU VMS unit. The reimbursement does not include the costs associated with installation or service providers.

E-MTU VMS units are more technologically advanced than the Mobile Transmitting Unit (MTU) VMS units currently required in Atlantic HMS Fisheries and have the capability for two-way communication and electronic messaging. The new VMS units would provide NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) with the ability to communicate directly with individual vessels via electronic messaging and other means. Using this technology, NOAA OLE would have the ability to notify vessels of emergency changes to closed areas; provide notice of fishery closures in real time; inform operators of environmental disasters (oil rig fires/oil spills); send notices concerning dangerous weather; and, receive distress or emergency transmissions.

Vessels with Atlantic HMS permits that are required to use VMS include vessels with pelagic longline (PLL) gear, vessels with bottom longline (BLL) gear in the vicinity of the mid-Atlantic closed area (between 33° N and 36° 30' N) from January 1 to July 31, and shark gillnet vessels fishing between November 15 and April 15. These permit holders may be eligible to receive reimbursement funds to offset the costs of E-MTU VMS units. All new units must comply with the most recent type approval notice published by NOAA OLE on January 31, 2008 (73 FR 5813).

Existing requirements concerning use of VMS in HMS fisheries are not changing at this time, however, NMFS is expecting to publish a proposed rule in the near future that would modify VMS regulations in HMS fisheries.

Vessel owners should initiate their application process by contacting the National VMS Program at ole.helpdesk@noaa.gov, or by calling 888-219-9228. The VMS help desk will issue a confirmation number if the applicant is eligible for reimbursement. After a confirmation number is issued, the applicant should contact the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC), 205 SE Spokane Street, Suite 100, Portland Oregon 97202, phone 503-595-3100 for a Reimbursement Application. The PSMFC is the organization that will issue reimbursement.

Printed on Recycled Paper

For more information please contact the VMS Help Desk at the email address or phone number above; or see Federal Register 73FR 24955 (May 6, 2008); or contact Kelly Spalding, *VMS Management Analyst*, 301.427.2300.

This notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about HMS fisheries. Relevant information will also be posted on the HMS website at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/.

SIGN UP FOR ATLANTIC HMS NEWS
-- An electronic newsletter informing you of the latest HMS-related actions --
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/newslist/

APR 0 1 2011

Emily Menashes

Emily Menashes
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

Date