



## **NOAA Fisheries Proposes Effective Dates for Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) For Directed Shark Vessels**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) published a proposed rule in the Federal Register on May 18, 2004 (69 FR 28106), that would lift the stay on the requirement to have a NOAA-approved, VMS unit installed and operating on vessels with a directed shark limited access permit. The VMS requirement provides that:

- As of **November 15, 2004**, directed shark vessels with gillnet gear onboard regardless of location would be required to have VMS installed and operating during Right Whale Calving Season (November 15 – March 31).
- As of **January 1, 2005**, directed shark vessels with bottom longline fishing gear onboard that are located between 33 and 36 30' N latitude would be required to have VMS equipment installed and operational during the mid-Atlantic shark closure (January 1 – July 31).

The VMS requirement was finalized on December 24, 2003 (68 FR 74746), and was delayed pending a type-approval notice that was published on April 15, 2004, (69 FR 19979). This rule would make the requirement effective but not modify the substantive requirements. Comments should be sent to Christopher Rogers, Chief, Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 by July 2, 2004. Comments can also be emailed to 042204B.Issues@noaa.gov.

To obtain copies of the list of NOAA Fisheries approved VMS mobile transmitting units and communications service providers, or information regarding the status of VMS units being evaluated by NOAA Fisheries for approval, write to NOAA Fisheries, Office for Law Enforcement (OLE), 8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 415, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or contact Jonathan Pinkerton, National VMS Program Manager, phone 301-427-2300.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. For further information regarding this proposed rule or the VMS requirement contact Mike Clark, Chris Rilling, or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at (301) 713-2347. Official notice of Federal fishing actions is made through filling such notice with the Office of Federal Register.

Galen R. Tromble for  
John H. Dunnigan, May 18, 2004  
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries