U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southwest Regional Office
501 W. Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200
Long Beach, CA 90802-4213
(562) 980-4000

Compliance Guide
Vessel Identification Requirements for Fishing Vessels that have a West Coast Highly Migratory Species Permit

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The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has issued regulations under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act and 16 U.S.C. 1821 to bring the west coast vessel identification requirements into conformity with the vessel identification requirements adopted by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). NMFS implemented the WCPFC vessel identification requirements on January 21, 2010 (see 50 CFR 300.217). The final rule to implement the changes to the west coast regulations was published in the *Federal Register* on November 29, 2011, at page 73518 of volume 76 and became effective on January 1, 2012. These regulations are codified in the *Code of Federal Regulations* at 50 CFR Sections 660.704 and 300.173.

This guide provides a summary of how owners and operators of affected vessels, and other affected entities, can comply with west coast vessel identification requirements. Regulations are subject to change, so this guide may become out of date. 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*.

For more information or to obtain additional copies of this guide please contact:

Regional Administrator
NMFS Southwest Regional Office
attn: Sustainable Fisheries Division
501 W. Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200
Long Beach, CA 90802

Tel: 562-980-4030
Fax: 562-980-4047
Email: nmfs.swr.ra@noaa.gov
Web: http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov

How do I know which vessel identification requirement to follow?

Use the following questions to figure out which vessel identification requirement you should follow.

1. Do you have a valid West Coast Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Permit?
    a. No: These regulations do not pertain to you.
    b. Yes: Continue to question 2.

2. Do you fish for HMS on the high seas in the WCPFC Area and/or have a WCPFC Area Endorsement (which is required to fish for HMS on the high seas in the WCPFC Area)?
    a. No: Continue to question 3.
    b. Yes: Your vessel must be marked with its International Radio Call Sign (IRCS), or if it has not been assigned an IRCS, then with its Federal, State, or other documentation number, preceded by the characters "USA-". Note: This vessel identification number will satisfy the requirements under the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty and for the West Coast HMS Permit. **[see Specs A]**

3. Do you fish under the U.S.-Canada Albacore Treaty?
    a. No: Continue to 4.
    b. Yes: You have a choice. You can mark your vessel in either of the two following ways:
        i. With its IRCS, or if it has not been assigned an IRCS, then with its Federal, State, or other documentation number, preceded by the characters "USA-" **[see Specs A]** OR
        ii. With the U.S. Coast Guard Documentation number (or if not documented, the state registration number) followed by the letter U. **[see Specs B]**

4. If you answered "no" to questions 2 and 3 above, you have a choice in how you can mark your vessel. You can mark your vessel in either of the two following ways:
    a. With its IRCS, or if it has not been assigned an IRCS, then with its Federal, State, or other documentation number, preceded by the characters "USA-" **[see Specs A]** OR
    b. With the U.S. Coast Guard Documentation number (or if not documented, the state registration number). **[see Specs B]**

Detailed Specifications (Size, Location & Color of Markings)

Specs A[1]:

1) The markings must be displayed at all times on the vessel's side or superstructure, port and starboard, as well as on a deck. The markings must be placed so that they do not extend below the waterline, are not obscured by fishing gear, whether stowed or in use,

[1] These requirements can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 300.14(b)(2) and 300.217.

and are clear of flow from scuppers or overboard discharges that might damage or discolor the markings.

2) Block lettering and numbering must be used for the markings.

3) The height of the letters and numbers must be in proportion to the length of the vessel as follows.

Vessel Length	*Minimum Height of Numbers/Letters*
Over 25 m	**1.0 m**
20 - 25 m	**0.8 m**
15 - 20 m	**0.6 m**
12 - 15 m	**0.4 m**
5 - 12 m	**0.3 m**
Under 5 m	**0.1 m**

4) The height of the letters and numbers to be placed on decks must be no less than 0.3 m and the length of the hyphen(s), if any, must be half the height (h) of the letters and numbers.

5) The width of the stroke for all letters, numbers, and hyphens must be h/6 and the space between letters and/or numbers must not exceed h/4 nor be less than h/6. The space between adjacent letters having sloping sides must not exceed h/8 nor be less than h/10.

Please see examples below

6) The marks must be white on a black background, or black on a white background. The background must extend to provide a border around the mark of no less than h/6, and the marks and the background must be maintained in good condition at all times.

Please see examples below

7) Any boat, skiff, or other watercraft carried on board the fishing vessel must be marked with the same identification markings as the fishing vessel and in the same manner.

8) With the exception of the vessel's name and hailing port, the vessel identification mark described above shall be the only vessel identification mark consisting of letters and numbers to be displayed on the hull and superstructure.

Specs B[2]:

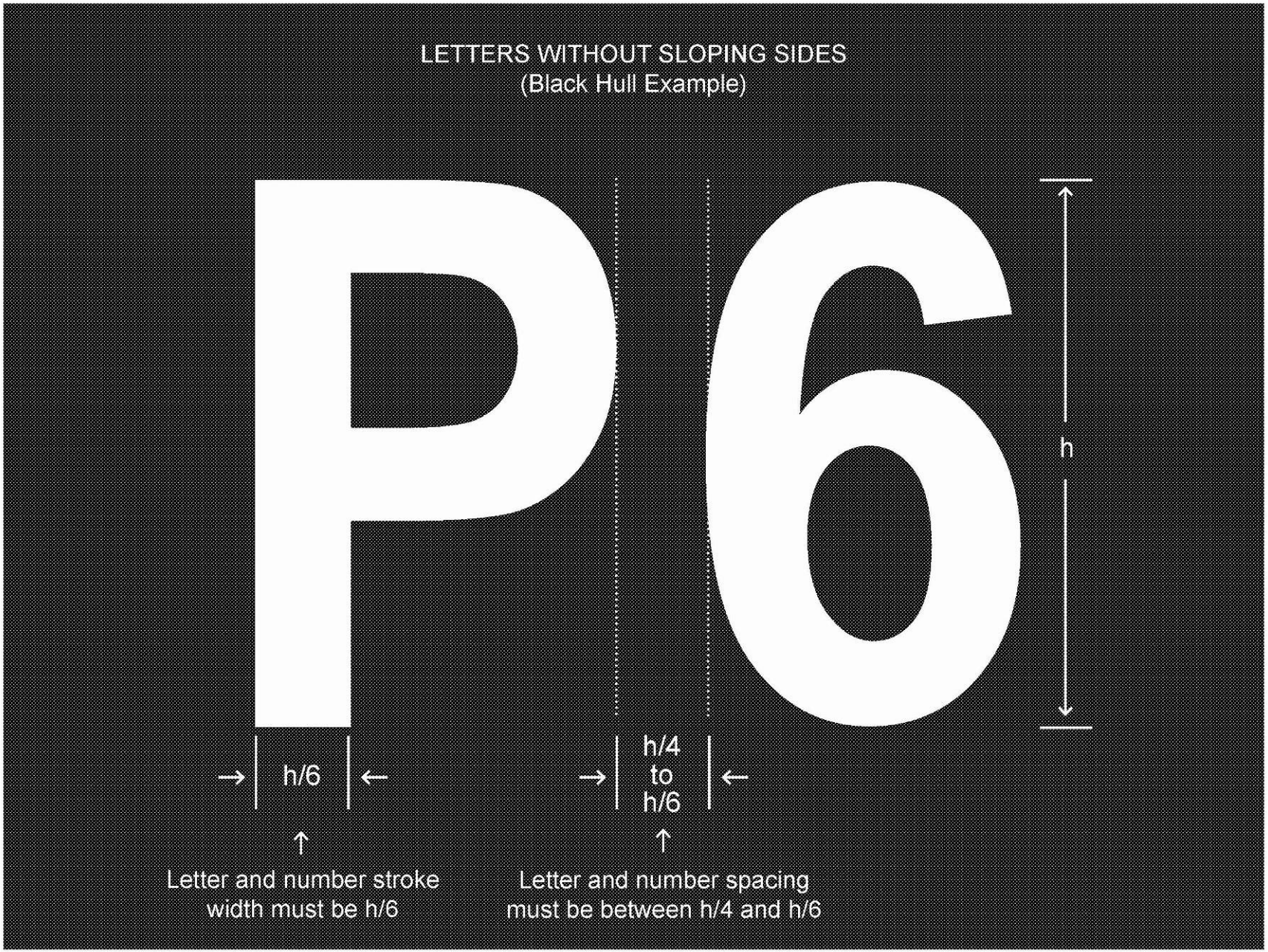
1) The vessel's official number must be affixed to the port and starboard sides of the deckhouse or hull, and on an appropriate weather deck so as to be visible from enforcement vessels and aircraft.

2) Block Arabic numerals must be used for the markings. The height of the numbers must be in proportion to the length of the vessel as follows:
   For vessel lengths:
   a. over 65 ft (19.81 m): the height must be no less than 18 inches (45.72 cm or 0.46 m)
   b. 25 ft (7.62 m) – 65 ft (19.81 m): the height must be no less than 10 inches (25.40 cm or .25 m)

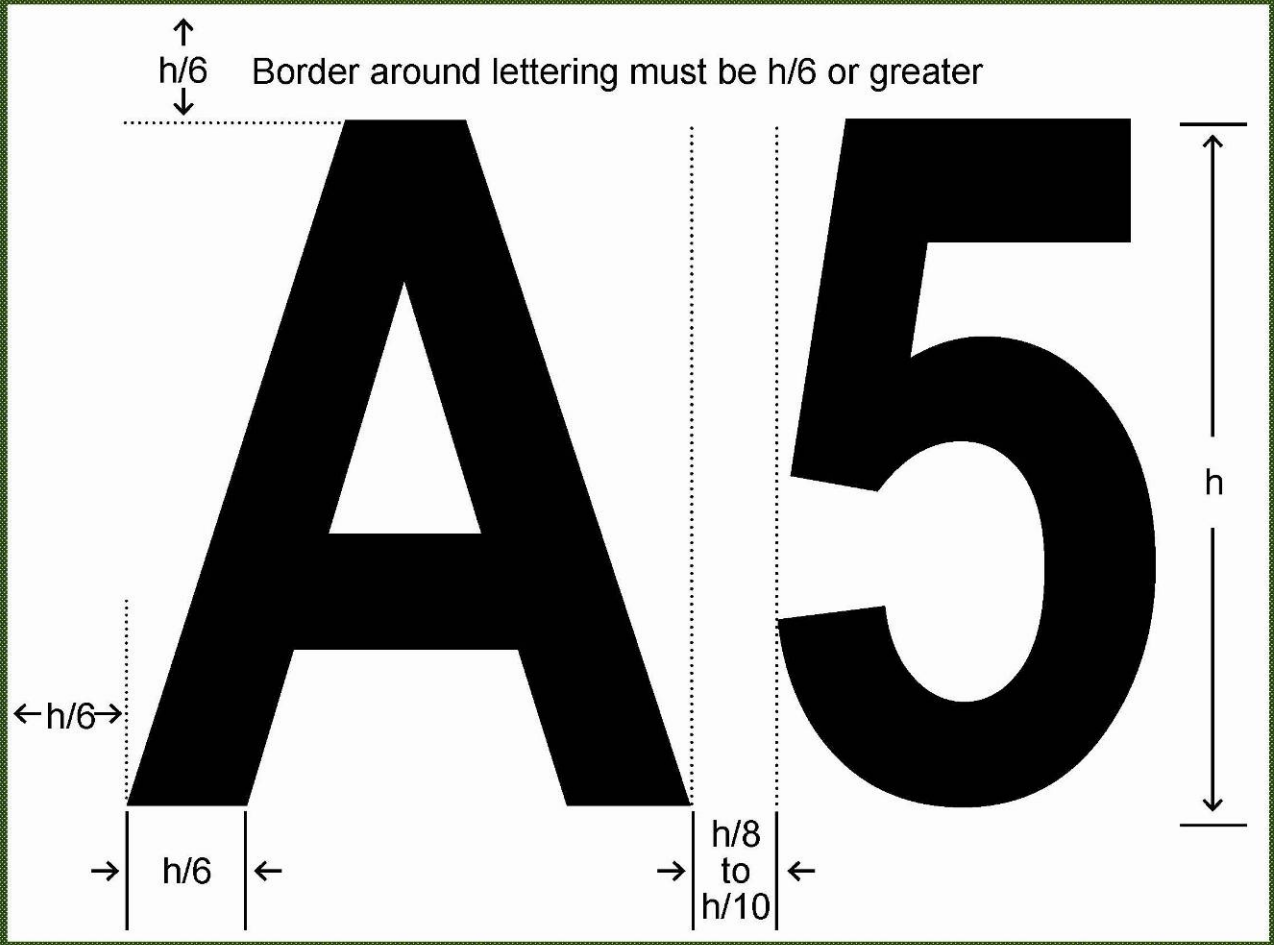
3) Markings must be legible and of a color that contrasts with the background.

[2] These requirements can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 300.173 and 660.704.

Examples of Vessel Markings:



LETTERS WITH SLOPING SIDES
(Hull Color Example)



Letter and number stroke width must be h/6

If letter has sloping side, spacing must be between h/8 to h/10