



Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

Background

The Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division of the Office of Sustainable Fisheries oversees the management of tunas, sharks, swordfish, and billfish in U.S. waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea. This includes the development and implementation of fishery management plans. In early May, HMS announced and is requesting public comments on multiple management initiatives.

Management Initiatives

The first management initiative HMS announced was on May 1, 2023, NMFS released a proposed rule for [Amendment 15](#) to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic HMS Fishery Management Plan (spatial management and electronic monitoring). The proposed rule has two broad components: (1) Modification, data collection, and assessment of four commercial longline spatial management areas; and (2) Modification of the administration and funding of the HMS pelagic longline electronic monitoring program. The four commercial longline spatial management areas (the Mid-Atlantic Shark, Charleston Bump, East Florida Coast, and DeSoto Canyon closed areas) currently prohibit commercial bottom or pelagic longline fishing during all or portions of the year. The proposed measures would modify the areas and allow data collection to help assess their efficacy. The proposed rule also includes modifications to the administration and funding of the HMS pelagic longline electronic monitoring program, including considerations of transitioning sampling costs from the Agency to industry. The public comment period for Amendment 15 closes on September 15, 2023. Written comments can be submitted electronically [here](#).

On May 10, 2023, NMFS published an [Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Electronic Reporting](#). Topics under consideration include:

- Convert existing commercial paper logbooks to electronic logbooks.
- Expand logbook reporting to permit holders in additional commercial fisheries and certain recreational fisheries (e.g., HMS Charter/Headboat) via electronic logbooks.
- Collect additional information through existing electronic reporting mechanisms for dealers and recreational permit holders.
- Facilitate HMS reporting, through incentives and/or penalties.
- Provide electronic reporting for HMS Exempted Fishing Permit Program permit holders.

The public comment period for the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Electronic Reporting closes on August 18, 2023. Written comments can be submitted electronically [here](#).

Additionally, on May 8, 2023, NMFS released a scoping document and announced a number of scoping meetings and webinars for [Amendment 16](#). The scoping document considers a range of issues and options including:

- A variety of commercial and recreational fishery options based on the revised acceptable biological catch and annual catch limits (ACLs) for shark stocks.
- Potential revisions to commercial fishery options for shark management groups and quotas along with commercial retention limits.
- Implementing ACLs and quotas for the recreational fishery sector leads to a review of the authorized species list, minimum size limits, and bag limits.

The public comment period for Amendment 16 closes on August 18, 2023. Written comments can be submitted electronically [here](#).