



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901
Phone: 302-674-2331 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | www.mafmc.org
Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | P. Weston Townsend, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 26, 2023
To: Council
From: Hannah Hart, Staff
Subject: Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Update

The Council will receive a presentation from the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division of the Office of Sustainable Fisheries on Wednesday, June 7, 2023. This presentation will include information related to recent and ongoing domestic HMS management initiatives.

Background

The Atlantic 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 cooperation with the HMS Advisory Panel. The HMS Advisory Panel is made up of a variety of stakeholder groups including commercial and recreational fisherman, academia, non-governmental organizations, and state, Commission, and Council representatives. A single Council member from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council sits on the HMS Advisory Panel to act as a liaison between the Council and HMS.

The HMS Advisory Panel typically meets twice a year (spring and fall). The most recent meeting was held on [May 9-11, 2023](#). Leading up to the meeting, HMS announced several rulemaking initiatives that were later discussed during the Advisory Panel meeting. Details about each initiative are provided below.

Management Initiatives

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.

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.

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.