

**NOAA FISHERIES ANNOUNCES THE AVAILABILITY OF THE FINAL
AMENDMENT 1 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR ATLANTIC TUNAS, SWORDFISH, AND SHARKS**

In 2002, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) conducted two new stock assessments for large and small coastal sharks. These stock assessments constitute the best available science and, in some cases, have resulted in a change of status of some shark species. Based on these new stock assessments, NOAA Fisheries decided that many of the shark management measures in the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks should be re-examined and amended, as necessary. Additionally, because of the change of status in some species, some essential fish habitat identifications need to be updated. The changes in Amendment 1 could affect all aspects of shark management.

Management measures selected in Amendment 1 include, among other things: aggregating the large coastal shark complex, using maximum sustainable yield as a basis for setting commercial quotas, eliminating the commercial minimum size, establishing regional commercial quotas and trimester commercial fishing seasons, adjusting the recreational bag and size limits, establishing gear restrictions to reduce bycatch or reduce bycatch mortality, establishing a time/area closure off the coast of North Carolina, removing the deepwater/other sharks from the management unit, establishing a mechanism for changing the species on the prohibited species list, updating essential fish habitat identifications for five species of sharks, and changing the administration for issuing permits for display purposes. Several changes from the draft Environmental Impact Statement were made including changing the percent reduction for the commercial quota level from 40 to 45 percent; allowing the continuation of the shark gillnet fishery as is with the intent of examining other methods of reducing bycatch in a future rulemaking; refining the time/area closure to more accurately reflect the area where dusky and juvenile sandbar sharks are caught; adjusting the area where VMS will be required for bottom longline vessels in conjunction with the refinement of the time/area closure; and making a commitment to implement workshops to improve species-identification, teach methods for using release equipment, and improve compliance with the regulations. The selected management measures are summarized in the attached table. The effective dates for the selected measures will likely vary from approximately January 1, 2004, to January 1, 2005. The final rule implementing the management measures in Amendment 1 will likely be published in the Federal Register before January 1, 2004.

Copies of Amendment 1 can be found on the Highly Migratory Species Management Division website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or by contacting Karyl Brewster-Geisz, Heather Stirratt, or Chris Rilling at (301) 713-2347 or Greg Fairclough at (727) 570-5447.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to shark fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register.

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John H. Dunnigan
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

November 7, 2003
Dated

Attachment

What would the Final Amendment 1 to the HMS FMP mean to you? Changes as a result of Amendment 1 are in italics.

PROHIBITED SPECIES				
The following sharks cannot be kept commercially or recreationally: Whale, basking, sand tiger, bigeye sand tiger, white, dusky, night, bignose, Galapagos, Caribbean reef, narrowtooth, longfin mako, bigeye thresher, sevengill, sixgill, bigeye sixgill, Caribbean sharpnose, smalltail, and Atlantic angel sharks. <i>There is a mechanism in place to add or remove species, as needed, via rulemaking.</i>				
COMMERCIAL REGULATIONS				
Management Unit	Species that can be retained	Quota (mt dw)	Regional Quotas	Authorized Gears
Large Coastal Sharks - directed commercial retention limit of 4,000 lb dw per trip - incidental retention limit	Sandbar, silky, tiger, blacktip, bull, spinner, lemon, nurse, smooth hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead	1,017	NA = 4% SA = 54% GM = 42%	Pelagic or Bottom Longline; Gillnet; Rod and Reel; Handline; Bandit Gear
Pelagic Sharks - no directed retention limit - incidental retention limit	Shortfin mako, thresher, oceanic whitetip	488	None	
	Porbeagle	92		
	Blue	273		
Small Coastal Sharks - no directed retention limit - incidental retention limit	Atlantic sharpnose, blacknose, finetooth, bonnethead	454	NA = 13% SA = 83% GM = 4%	
<u>Additional remarks:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All sharks not retained must be released in a manner that ensures the maximum probability of survival - Finning is prohibited for all sharks no matter what species - Fishing seasons: From January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2004, the fishing seasons will be January 1 to June 30 and July 1 to December 31; <i>Starting January 1, 2005, the fishing seasons will be January 1 to April 30; May 1 to August 30; September 1 to December 31</i> - <i>Fishing regions: NA = Maine through Virginia; SA = N. Carolina through East Florida and Caribbean; GM = Gulf of Mexico</i> - Quota over- and underharvest adjustments will be made for the same season the following year; no reopening that season - <i>Count state landings after Federal closure against Federal quota</i> - <i>Time/area closure for vessels with bottom longline gear on board: January through July between 35° 41'N to 33° 51'N and west of 74° 46'W, roughly following the 60 fathom contour line, diagonally south to 76° 24'W and north to 74° 51'W.</i> - <i>Vessel Monitoring Systems required for all gillnet vessels during right whale calving season and from January through July for all vessels with bottom longline gear on board between 33° 00'N and 36° 30'N</i> - Limited access; Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) requirements; <i>Display permits for collection for public display</i> - Observer and reporting requirements - For incidental limited access permit holders: 5 large coastal sharks per trip; a total of 16 pelagic or small coastal sharks (all species combined) per vessel per trip - Vessel with bottom longline gear on board must: (1) have non-stainless steel corrodible hooks; (2) have a dehooking device (when approved), linecutters, and a dipnet on board; (3) move 1 nmi after an interaction with a protected species; and (4) post sea turtle handling and release guidelines in the wheelhouse 				
RECREATIONAL REGULATIONS				
Management Unit	Species that can be kept	Retention Limit	Authorized Gear	
Large Coastal, Pelagic, and Small Coastal Sharks	LCS: Sandbar, silky, tiger, blacktip, bull, spinner, lemon, nurse, smooth hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead Pelagic: shortfin mako, thresher, oceanic whiteip, porbeagle, blue SCS: Atlantic sharpnose, blacknose, finetooth, bonnethead	1 shark per vessel per trip (all species) with a 4.5 feet fork length minimum size; allowance for 1 Atlantic sharpnose and 1 bonnethead per person per trip (no minimum size)	Rod and Reel; Handline	
<u>Additional remarks:</u> Harvested sharks must have fins, head, and tail attached (can be bled and gutted if tail is still attached).				