



## National Marine Fisheries Service



### FACT SHEET: Mandatory HMS Workshops Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, & Identification Workshops & Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops

The Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP) and the associated final rule (71 FR 58058; October 2, 2006), implemented regulatory requirements for some HMS fishermen and dealers to attend a workshop prior to renewing or obtaining their HMS permit. The workshop requirements are summarized below. Please see the complete regulatory text, which takes precedence over this information.

#### *Workshop Objectives*

##### **Safe Handling, Release, & Identification Workshops:**

The objective of these workshops is to provide fishermen with the skills to reduce the mortality of protected species in compliance with the 2003 and 2004 Biological Opinions for the shark and pelagic longline fisheries, respectively. These workshops are designed to educate longline and gillnet fishermen on the proper techniques for safe handling and release of entangled or hooked protected species, such as sea turtles, marine mammals, and smalltooth sawfish. The identification of protected species is also taught at these workshops to help improve the accuracy of reporting.

##### **Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops:**

The objective of these workshops is to reduce the number of unknown and improperly identified sharks reported in the dealer reporting form and increase the accuracy of species specific dealer reported information. Reducing the number of unknown and improperly identified sharks improves quota monitoring and the data used in stock assessments. These workshops train shark dealer permit holders or their proxies on how to properly identify Atlantic shark carcasses.

#### *Mandatory Workshop Attendance*

##### **Safe Handling, Release, & Identification Workshops:**

Vessel owners with a Federal commercial shark or swordfish limited access permit who deploy longline or shark gillnet gear, as well as the vessel operator.

Crew members are not required to attend a workshop; however, if space allows, crew members may attend voluntarily.

*Proxies:* Vessel owners and operators may not send someone else (i.e., a proxy) instead of attending the workshop themselves.

##### **Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops:**

All Federally-permitted shark dealers.

*Proxies:* Permitted shark dealers may send someone else (i.e., a proxy) to a shark identification workshop, instead of attending themselves. If a dealer decides to send a proxy, then a proxy from each place of business which first receives sharks under the dealer's permit must attend the workshop. A proxy must be a person who is currently employed by a business authorized to receive sharks under the dealer's permit; is a primary participant in the identification, weighing, and/or first receipt of fish as they are offloaded from a vessel; and is involved in filling out dealer reports.

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### ***Deadlines & Proof of Workshop Certification***

#### **Safe Handling, Release, & Identification Workshops:**

Vessel owners and operators that fish with longline or gillnet gear must be certified as having completed a workshop on the safe handling, release, and identification of protected species prior to the owner renewing or transferring a shark or swordfish limited access vessel permit.

Vessels may not fish unless both the vessel owner and operator workshop certificates are on the vessel, even if the owner is not on board.

Applications for permit renewals or transfers will not be considered complete and a permit will not be issued until the vessel owner's workshop certificate is presented.

#### **Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops:**

All Federally-permitted shark dealers must be certified as having completed the shark identification workshop. Applications for permit renewals will be considered incomplete and a permit will not be issued unless a copy (or copies, if multiple locations first receive sharks) of a valid shark identification workshop certificate is submitted.

Shark dealers with multiple locations authorized to receive sharks under one permit will be issued a separate workshop certificate for each location. A workshop certificate must be available at every location which first receives sharks under the dealer's permit. Trucks or other conveyances which are extensions of a dealer's place of business must possess a copy of a valid dealer or proxy certificate.

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### ***Workshop Certification Renewal***

The safe handling, release, and identification workshop certificates and Atlantic shark identification workshop certificates must be renewed every three years prior to the expiration date on the certificate.

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### ***Workshop Certificates Are Not Transferable***

Anyone interested in receiving an HMS swordfish or shark vessel permit or a shark dealer permit must attend a workshop, obtain certification, and submit a copy of the certificate with the application to obtain, renew or transfer an HMS permit. The free workshops are conducted regularly.

Workshop certificates are not transferable because the person issued the certificate is responsible for knowing the techniques and protocols for the safe handling and release of protected species or the proper identification of Atlantic shark carcasses.

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### ***2005 Industry-Sponsored Handling and Release Workshops***

Individuals that attended and successfully completed an industry-sponsored certification workshop in 2005 automatically received a valid protected species safe handling, release, and identification workshop certificate. Many certificates are beginning to expire in 2009, so recertification may be required prior to permit renewal in 2009.

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**For more information about mandatory HMS Workshops, please contact the HMS Management Division at 301-713-2347. As soon as new workshop dates and locations are scheduled, the details are posted to the HMS website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/workshops/> and the information is mailed to permit holders.**