



Atlantic HMS Advisory Panel Meeting

Bethesda, Maryland

March 29-31, 2016



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Day 1

- Overview and Recent Actions
 - ICCAT 2015
- NOAA and USCG Law Enforcement
 - International Activities
- Electronic Bluefin Tuna Document (eBCD) Rulemaking
- Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Management
 - Public Comment

Tuesday, March 29, 2016



Opening Remarks and Agency Activities

- Some AP members would like to participate in all breakout sessions when they occur
- Would like to further discuss the management of dolphin by SAFMC
- Would like to see swordfish landings updates by permit type
- Would like to see comparisons of IBQ data and swordfish landings

ICCAT 2015

- Concern about activities in the Gulf of Guinea and their impact on bigeye and yellowfin tuna availability in the Western Atlantic
- Support for and independent review of this impact

NOAA and USCG Law Enforcement

- Would like to see observers trained in law enforcement, since they are documenting violations
- Would like to see investigation into restaurants, and ability to identify fish source
- Concern about IUU fishing in U.S. waters of the Gulf of Mexico by small boats from Mexico; encouragement for participation of U.S. State Dept and other U.S. agencies to address this issue

FAO Caribbean Billfish Project

- Question premise of rights-based fishery management using FADs:
 - Doubt that there is less mortality by commercial fishermen compared to high numbers of recreational fishermen.
 - If similar to marinas in Dominican Republic, charterboats pay cooperatives to not fish around FADs so the charterboats can fish there – concept has potential.
- Caribbean billfish workshop in Panama stressed importance of improving fisheries data collection/reporting.
- Questions/concerns about implications for domestic implementation should WECAFC become an RFMO.

Electronic Bluefin Tuna Catch Document (eBCD) Rulemaking

- Concern about meeting deadlines (Goal to publish the final rule by April 1 to be effective May 1)
- Final rule filed March 31st, publishes April 1st, and is effective May 1st.
- Public conference call/webinars on April 21st, April 22nd, and May 3rd to provide HMS ITP holders with further information on use of the eBCD system

Day 2

- Breakout Sessions: Pelagic Longline and Handgear
- Economic Survey of HMS Tournaments
- Atlantic Shark Management
- Atlantic HMS Essential Fish Habitat: Amendment 10
- 2016 Shark Season Rule
- Lemon Shark Discussion

Wednesday, March 30, 2016



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Bluefin Tuna Management

Retention Limits and Seasons

Angling category

- Increase limit for private vessels (2 school + 1 large school/small medium)
- Increase limit for CHBs (3 school + 1 large school/small medium)
- Announce soon to allow planning/trip marketing

General category

- Increase to 5-fish limit for June through August
- Allow fishing of January subquota until it's met (vs. hard close on March 31)

Harpoon category

- Maintain default limit of 2 large medium BFT

All categories

- Manage fishery by quotas only and not via season open/close dates

Purse seine fishery start date

- Do/do not open sooner than July 15
- Understand that factors other than purse seine landings affect BFT price
- Continued general support of issuing EFP for collection of data and biological samples

Bluefin Tuna Management

Bluefin Tuna Catch Reporting

Commercial handgear

- Suggest requiring online report (& confirmation number) prior to sale to dealer to get ~100% compliance
- Work toward one-stop reporting tools
- Agreement that more outreach is needed
- Suggest changes to NMFS Permit Shop contractor's customer service hours beyond typical workday
- Interest in seeing % compliance for 2015 once quality review complete
- Consider a category's compliance prior to making inseason quota transfers
- Conversely, recognize this is the first year of requirement

Recreational

- Interest in seeing % compliance for Angling and Charter/Headboats

Bluefin Tuna Management

2015 Bluefin Tuna Dead Discard Estimate

- Interest in seeing preliminary 2015 estimate when ready
- Preliminary data appear to indicate that the 2015 estimate will be lower than 2014 estimate given implementation of A7 in 2015

IBQ system

- Fundamentals of system are working
- Permit holders are finding each other for leasing
- Concerns remain regarding pricing and availability of IBQ
- Sometimes BFT revenue not making it to crew; it's held to lease more IBQ
- Concerns about the allocation scheme; quota should be for the active fishery
- Consider quarterly or semi-annual accounting
- Allow some use of Atlantic IBQ in the Gulf of Mexico for certain time periods

Bluefin Tuna Management

Electronic Monitoring

- Technical issues remain (e.g., quality of hardware, interference issues)
- Concerns regarding contractor/subcontractor knowledge
- Concerns regarding future costs of replacement/repairs
- Evaluate requirement to submit hard drive after every trip
- Given EM, consider relaxing some restrictions; using the technology for more than BFT discards

Communication

- Continue current multiple means of communication

Bluefin Tuna Management

3-Year Review

- Revisit A7 goals and objectives
- Evaluate IBQ allocation scheme
- Revisit effectiveness/relevance of closed areas given A7 data
 - Pursue EFP and scientific research
- Look at barriers to new entrants; examine attrition in the fishery

Other Comments

- Pursue cooperative research re: BFT in Slope Sea
- Interest is seeing where fishery is currently occurring and associated bycatch
- Relax the regulation that limits demersal species to less than 5% of all indicator (demersal and pelagic) possessed or landed

Tournament Economics Survey

- Clarify that there are 2 different surveys:
 - Operator survey of all tournaments, and
 - Participant expenditures survey of 50% of tournaments each month.
Note that both surveys are voluntary
- Conduct more outreach!
- Incorporate "Terminal Tackle" into the "Tackle and Durable Equipment Expenses" section
- Make sure the gear examples in the tackle section reflect typical HMS gears
- Trip expenses - Reorganize so that they are listed in relative order of purchase (e.g., expenditures before the tournament, then traveling to the tournament, then at the tournament, etc.)
- Passcodes - We were encouraged to provide unique passcodes for each team to avoid multiple responses from a single team

Amendment 9: Smoothhound Sharks

- Overview of Amendment 9 measures, focusing on smoothhound sharks, including smooth dogfish
- Effective March 15, 2016
- Question from AP about determining final market for smoothhound sharks:
 - Staff unsure at this time, but will look into it

Shark Management

Blacknose Sharks

- Questions regarding gears used and area where fishermen catch blacknose sharks
- Support for a year round SCS fishery
- Some support for Alternative 3c (8 blacknose per trip)
- Concern over 100% blacknose shark landed trips
- Need to update blacknose stock assessment
- Mackerel fishermen should be allowed to retain SCS

Caribbean Sharks

- NMFS should reconsider allowable sharks in the Caribbean
- Caribbean sharpnose and Caribbean reef sharks should be prioritized for review
- Upcoming FAD rule could change way fishermen catch sharks
- Offshore, they may be catching mostly silky sharks

HMS Essential Fish Habitat – Amendment 10

- In early 2016, the commercial industry and community came together to find resolution on lemon shark issues off FL. Commercial fishermen avoided area. Grassroots avoidance initiatives can resolve problems without regulations, at least in short term
- NMFS needs to clarify how EFH and HAPCs are used for management in the future.
 - When are internal agency processes triggered to develop fishery management changes?
- Heard concerns about designating a HAPC or other special management areas.

2016 Shark Season Rule and Lemon Sharks

- Appreciate Dr. Carlson's summary of lemon shark science
- NMFS should provide state fishermen landings separate from federal fishermen landings
- NMFS should show lemon shark data out of South FL
- There is a disconnect between what fishermen see and what the agency sees regarding shark abundance and distribution
- NMFS should prioritize a sandbar stock assessment; some discussion on other assessments

Comments from the Public

- Additional lemon shark research provided (from researchers)
- Concern regarding protection of a unique lemon shark aggregation that is only found off Southeastern FL - unique behavior, localized population decrease seen
- NMFS needs to revisit shark opening date
- NMFS needs to prioritize enforcement actions to address illegal sales of Atlantic HMS and IUU fishing

Swordfish Permits and Regulations

Mostly supported, with some exceptions:

- Remove SWO Directed upgrade restrictions
- Increase SWO Incidental retention limits
- Increase SWO Gen Cat retention limits

Mostly opposed:

- Increase SWO Gen Cat retention limits in FL East Coast Management Area

News: Public Comment Periods



- No HMS comment periods open at the moment
- Traceability regulation open comment period closes April 12th



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Thank you

*A special thank you to Pat Augustine for the
tasty cookies!!*

Please let us know if there are important topics we covered that were not captured in this summary

Travel receipts are due **April 8th**

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Please complete evaluation forms before you leave