

XIX. HMS WORKSHOPS

PROTECTED SPECIES SAFE HANDLING, RELEASE, AND IDENTIFICATION

The objective of the **Protected Species Safe Handling, Release and Identification Workshops** is to provide fishermen with the skills to reduce the mortality of protected species consistent with the Biological Opinions and Take Reduction Plans for the pelagic longline and shark 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. Identification of protected species will also be taught at these workshops in an effort to improve reporting.

All owners of vessels issued commercial shark and swordfish directed or incidental limited access permits that use longline or gillnet gear on their vessel must become certified at a Protected Species Safe Handling, Release and Identification Workshop. Certificates expire, and must be renewed, every three years. At least one operator onboard these vessels, if different from the vessel owner, must also attend the workshop. Both the vessel owner and operator must attend the workshop and become certified prior to renewing the vessel's shark and swordfish limited access permit. Accordingly, two safe handling, release, and identification workshop certificates must be on board vessels with longline or gillnet gear – one issued to the vessel owner, even if the owner is not on board, and a second issued to the vessel operator. Applications for renewals or transfers will not be considered complete and a vessel permit will not be issued until a valid workshop certificate from the vessel owner is presented. Vessels may not fish unless both an owner certificate and at least one operator certificate are on board the vessel.⁴⁰³

Vessel owner and operators that are required to attend a protected species safe handling, release, and identification workshop may not send someone else (i.e., a proxy) to a workshop instead of attending themselves.⁴⁰⁴ Crew members may attend workshops; however, crew members are not required to attend workshops. Vessel owners and operators are not required to train crew members on safe handling, release, and identification of protected species, but are strongly encouraged to share the information with their crew.

ATLANTIC SHARK IDENTIFICATION

The objective of the **Atlantic Shark Identification 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 will improve quota monitoring and the data used in stock assessments. These workshops are required for shark dealer permit holders or their proxies to train them on how to properly identify Atlantic shark carcasses. Shark fishermen, or any fishermen who may catch sharks, are also encouraged to attend.

All federally-permitted Atlantic shark dealers, or their proxies, must attend an Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop before renewing their permit.⁴⁰⁵ Additionally, HMS Commercial Caribbean Small Boat permit holders may be required to attend a workshop and receive a certificate if shark retention limits are set above zero (0) fish. A valid workshop “dealer” or “proxy” certificate must be available at every location which first receives sharks under a dealer permit. Trucks or other conveyances which are extensions of a dealer's place of business, must possess a copy of a valid workshop certificate. Permitted shark dealers will be issued a workshop “dealer” certificate for each location authorized to first receive sharks under a dealer permit. Dealer proxies will be issued a “proxy” workshop certificate. If a permitted shark dealer chooses to send a proxy to a workshop, instead of

attending themselves, a proxy from every business location authorized to first receive sharks under the dealer's permit must attend a shark identification workshop. A proxy must be a person who is currently employed by a business authorized to first 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. Applications for Atlantic shark dealer permit renewals will not be considered complete and a renewal will not be issued unless a valid "dealer" or "proxy" workshop certification is presented for each location which first receives sharks under a dealer permit.⁴⁰⁶

Persons holding an expired Atlantic shark dealer permit, and persons who intend to apply for a new Atlantic shark dealer permit, will be issued a "participant" certificate in their name upon successful completion of the Atlantic shark identification workshop. A "participant" certificate may be used only to apply for an Atlantic shark dealer permit. After an Atlantic shark dealer permit is issued to a person using an Atlantic shark identification workshop "participant" certificate, such person may obtain an Atlantic shark identification workshop "dealer" certificate for each location which first receives Atlantic sharks by contacting NOAA Fisheries at an address designated by NOAA Fisheries.⁴⁰⁷

WORKSHOP RENEWAL/RESTRICTIONS

All Protected Species Safe Handling, Release and Identification and Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop certificates are **valid for 3 years and must be renewed prior to the expiration date on the certificate.**⁴⁰⁸ Workshop dates and locations will be listed on the HMS website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>. The list is available by calling the HMS Management Division at (301) 427-8503.

Please note that workshop certificates are not transferable⁴⁰⁹ because the person issued the certificate is responsible for being familiar with the techniques and protocols for the safe handling and release of protected species or the proper identification of Atlantic shark carcasses. An individual interested in receiving an HMS vessel permit for use with longline or gillnet gear or a shark dealer permit must first attend a workshop, obtain a participant certification, and submit a copy of the certificate with the application for the appropriate HMS permit. After they receive the appropriate HMS permit, the vessel owner or shark dealer may obtain the appropriate workshop certificate.