

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division announces the availability of the 2009 Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report. The SAFE Report contains a review of the current status of Atlantic HMS stocks (tunas, swordfish, billfish, and sharks), describes the year's accomplishments in managing Atlantic HMS, and provides an assessment of short-term future management of Atlantic HMS. The SAFE Report provides Atlantic HMS fishery constituents information on the latest developments in Atlantic HMS management as well as fulfilling Magnuson-Stevens Act requirements.

In 2009 the HMS Management Division completed numerous management actions including Final Amendment 1 for Essential Fish Habitat and Draft Amendment 3 relating to small coastal sharks (SCS), pelagic sharks, and smooth dogfish. In addition, the HMS Division continued working on Amendment 4 relating to Caribbean issues, a bluefin tuna regulatory amendment, and an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to examine options to more thoroughly utilize the available BFT and swordfish quotas. As described more thoroughly in Chapter 1, the HMS Management Division also implemented annual quota specifications for Atlantic tunas and swordfish, completed several inseason management actions, and participated in the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) negotiations to ensure U.S. interests were well represented. NMFS participated in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) discussions regarding potential listing of Atlantic bluefin under Appendix 1 and several shark species under Appendix 2.

A few structural modifications were made to this year's SAFE Report to reduce duplication and increase readability.

- 1) Much of the redundancy found in previous SAFE Reports, regarding bycatch in Chapters 4 (Fishery Data Update) and Chapter 8 (Bycatch, Incidental Catch, and Protected Species), has been removed.
- 2) In previous SAFE Reports, Chapter 7 was devoted to international trade, which has now been incorporated into Chapter 5 (Economic Status of HMS Fisheries).
- 3) Chapter 4 previously included lengthy descriptions of status of the stocks, which were largely derived from other documents such as ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) documents, the U.S. National Report, and Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) documents. Rather than duplicating that information, that discussion has been replaced with links and references to the source documents.
- 4) Safety Issues, which were previously covered in Chapter 4 at the end of each gear section, have been consolidated into a single section in Chapter 4 (Section 4.9 Safety Issues).

Feedback and comments on this SAFE Report are encouraged and should be sent to the HMS Management Division, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, phone: 301 713-2347, fax: 301 713-1917.