

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division announces the availability of the 2011 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) and describes the year's accomplishments in managing Atlantic HMS. The SAFE Report provides Atlantic HMS fishery constituents information on the latest developments in Atlantic HMS management as well as fulfills Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requirements.

In 2011, the HMS Management Division completed numerous management actions including a final rule requiring the use of weak hooks in the Gulf of Mexico pelagic longline fishery, which will allow spawning BFT to escape capture; a final rule that modifies the permitting requirements and retention limits for Atlantic HMS that are incidentally-caught in Atlantic trawl fisheries; a final rule that requires all vessels with mobile transmitting unit vessel monitoring systems (VMS) to be replaced with enhanced mobile transmitting unit VMS and to declare target fishery and gear types before departing for a trip; and a final rule to address adjustments to the Atlantic BFT General and Harpoon category regulations. The HMS Management Division also published a proposed rule that would require all shark, swordfish, and bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack (BAYS) tunas dealers to report purchases in an electronic dealer system; a notice of intent (NOI) to rebuild certain species of sharks based on new stock assessments (Amendment 5); and an NOI regarding the Future of the Shark Fishery and consideration of catch shares (Amendment 6). In addition, the HMS Management Division continued working on Amendment 4 relating to the Caribbean issues as well as efforts to more thoroughly utilize the available bluefin tuna and swordfish quotas, and examined options to improve recreational monitoring of HMS fisheries. As described more thoroughly in Chapter 1, the HMS Management Division also implemented annual quota specifications for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, and sharks, 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.

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) 427-8503, fax: (301) 713-1917.