



NMFS Announces Two Additional Public Hearings and a Change in Date of One Public Hearing for Draft Amendment 5 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP

December 28, 2012

On November 26, 2012, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a proposed rule (77 FR 70552) for draft Amendment 5 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in response to several shark stock assessments that were completed from 2009 to 2012. The assessments for Atlantic blacknose, dusky, and scalloped hammerhead sharks indicated that these species are overfished and experiencing overfishing. As described in the proposed rule, we are proposing measures that would reduce fishing mortality and effort in order to rebuild overfished Atlantic shark species while ensuring that a limited sustainable shark fishery can be maintained consistent with our legal obligations and the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP. The proposed measures include changes to commercial quotas and species groups, the creation of several time/area closures, a change to an existing time/area closure, an increase in the recreational minimum size restrictions, and the establishment of recreational reporting for certain species of sharks. Any comments received during the comment period will be considered in the development and finalization of Amendment 5 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP.

On December 11, 2012, we announced six public hearings and two conference calls to provide the opportunity for public comment on the measures described in the proposed rule and draft Amendment 5 (77 FR 73608). Due to previously scheduled events in the New Orleans area, we have decided to reschedule the Belle Chasse, Louisiana hearing; see Table 1 for the new date and time. In addition, we announce two additional public hearings that will be held in Maryland and Texas due to requests from constituents. The Maryland public hearing will be held in conjunction with a state stakeholder meeting on Draft Amendment 5.

Table 1. Dates, Times and Locations of Upcoming Additional Public Hearings, Conference calls, and HMS Advisory Panel meeting. Details regarding other public hearings can be found in the Federal Register (77 FR 70552) or on the HMS webpage (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>)

Venue	Date/Time	Meeting Locations	Location Contact Information
Public Hearing	January 15, 2013 5 p.m. – 8 p.m.	Belle Chasse, LA	Belle Chasse Auditorium 8398 Hwy 23 Belle Chasse, LA 70037
Public Hearing	January 30, 2013 5 p.m. – 8 p.m.	Ocean Pines, MD	Ocean Pines Branch Worcester County Library 11107 Cathell Road Ocean Pines, MD 21811 (410) 208-4014
Public Hearing	February 7, 2013 5 p.m. – 8 p.m.	Houston, TX	Clear Lake City-County Freeman Branch Library 16616 Diana Lane Houston, Texas 77062 281-488-1906

The comment period for draft Amendment 5 ends on February 12, 2013. Written public comments can be submitted electronically, by mail, or by fax. Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2012-0161>, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. Submit written comments to Peter Cooper, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, please mark the outside of the envelope “Comments on the Draft Amendment 5 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP.” Comments may also be faxed to 301-713-1917

This notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. For further information on these proposed measures, contact Peter Cooper, Guý DuBeck, Jennifer Cudney, or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at 301-427-8503. The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>.

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