



### NMFS Announces:

- **Availability of the Final Rule for Amendment 5a to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan for Management of Atlantic Sharks, and**
- **Closure of the Gulf of Mexico Blacktip Shark Management Group on July 7 2013**

#### July 1, 2013

The final rule for Amendment 5a to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP) is now available. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), including the final actions identified for Amendment 5a, was made available on April 26, 2013 (78 FR 24743). This rulemaking maintains the rebuilding of sandbar sharks, ends overfishing and rebuilds scalloped hammerhead and Atlantic blacknose sharks, establishes total allowable catches (TAC) and commercial quotas for Gulf of Mexico blacknose and blacktip sharks, and establishes new recreational shark fishing management measures. The final rule is expected to publish on July 3, 2013. The final TACs and quota measures will be effective on July 3, 2013. The recreational measures will be effective August 2, 2013.

The final rule implements the new quotas for the rest of the 2013 fishing year. Based on dealer reports, we project that the landings for the commercial Gulf of Mexico blacktip shark management group will have reached or exceed 80 percent of the available quota by July 1, 2013. As required by regulations, 50 CFR 635.28(b), we are closing the commercial Gulf of Mexico blacktip shark management group as of 11:30 p.m. local time July 7, 2013. From the effective date and time of the closure until we announce, via a notice in the Federal Register, that additional quota is available and the season is reopened, this management group is closed, even across fishing years.

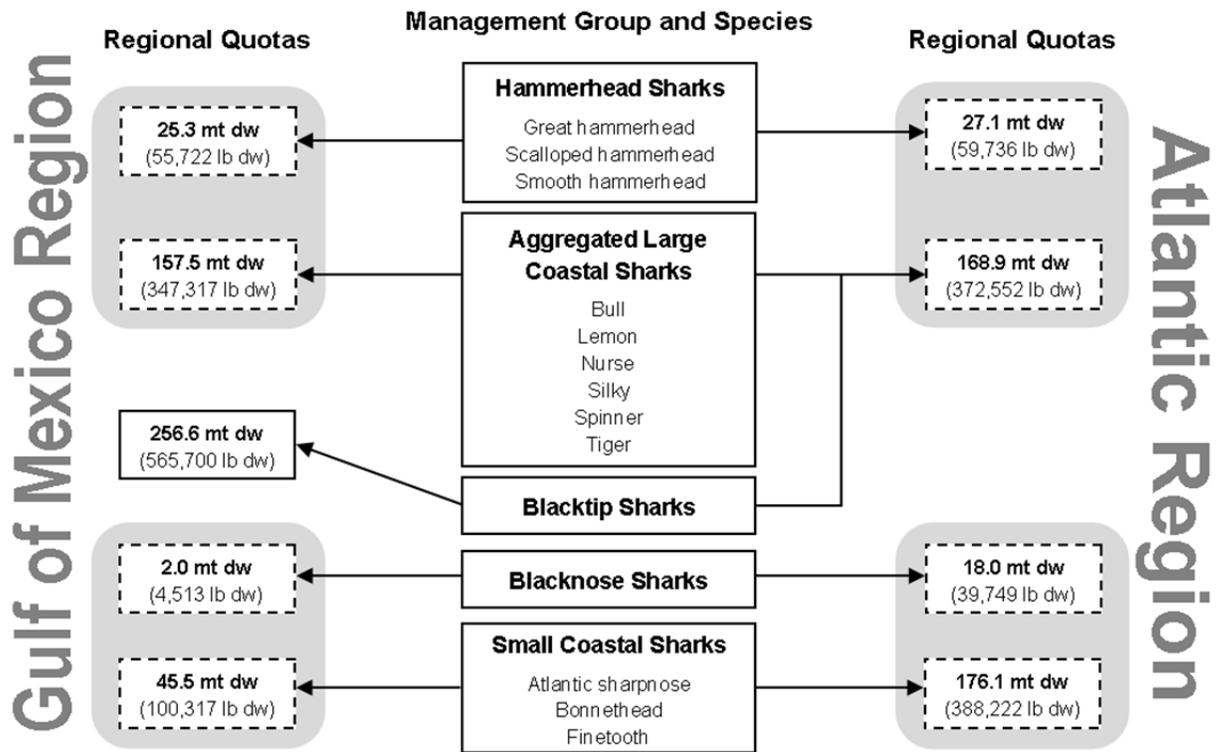
#### Who is affected?

The final rule for Amendment 5a could affect:

- Any commercial shark fishermen.
- Any recreational fishermen who catch sharks of any species.
- Any dealers who buy or sell sharks or shark products.

## What will it do?

For commercial fishermen, Amendment 5a establishes several new regional shark management groups and quotas. The species and quotas for each new management group are listed in the figure below by region (Figure 1). Quotas will continue to be adjusted annually to account for over- and/or under-harvests. Additionally, Amendment 5a implements regional quota linkages between management groups whose species are often caught together in the same fisheries to prevent exceeding the newly established quotas through discarded bycatch. Linked quotas are represented in the below graphic by gray boxes. When landings of either of two linked management groups reach, or are expected to reach, 80 percent of the quota, fishing for both management groups will close. Similarly, when landings reach, or are expected to reach, 80 percent of the quota of any unlinked management group (e.g., Gulf of Mexico blacktip or pelagic sharks), that management group will close. More information on the specific quotas for 2013 and preliminary landings updates are provided in a separate listserv notice.



*For recreational fishermen*, Amendment 5a established a new minimum size limit for the large hammerhead shark species (great, smooth, and scalloped) of 78 inches (6.5 feet) fork length (FL). As described in the table below, the size limit for other shark species and the retention limits remain the same. Please note that oceanic whitetip and hammerhead sharks cannot be possessed or landed by a vessel that also possesses or lands any tunas, billfish, or swordfish.

<b>Minimum Size</b>	<b>Species Authorized for Retention</b>	<b>Retention Limit</b>
54 inches FL	Shortfin mako, Porbeagle, Blue, Oceanic whitetip, Tiger, Thresher, Nurse, Lemon, Blacktip, Spinner, Bull, Finetooth, Blacknose	1 shark per vessel per trip
78 inches FL	Great hammerhead, Smooth hammerhead, Scalloped hammerhead	
None	Bonnethead, Atlantic sharpnose	1 each per person per vessel per trip

### Compliance Guide Available

We have prepared an Amendment 5a compliance guide to help fishery participants comply with the measures in this amendment. Copies of these documents and other Amendment 5a documents are available upon request from the Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone: 301-713-2347, fax: 301-713-1917). The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>.

This notice is a courtesy to Atlantic HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of Federal Register. For further information on this final environmental impact statement, contact Peter Cooper, Guý DuBeck, or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at 301-427-8503.

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