



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Trish Murphey, Chair | Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
John Carmichael, Executive Director

March 6, 2026

Karyl Brewster-Geisz
Highly Migratory Species Management Division
NMFS/SF1
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Comments on the Proposed Rule to Revise Commercial Atlantic Blacknose Shark & Recreational Atlantic Shark Fisheries Management Measures

Dear Ms. Brewster-Geisz:

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to provide our comments on the Proposed Rule to Revise Commercial Atlantic Blacknose Shark & Recreational Atlantic Shark Fisheries Management Measures. As you are aware, the Council has expressed concern over current shark management and frustration with the increasingly common interactions with sharks in a wide range of fisheries in the South Atlantic region. We welcome the opportunity to provide our input.

The Council feels that there are several circumstances where Atlantic shark fishery resources are being wasted or underutilized due to discards, both alive and dead, stemming from low trip limits and other management measures that are restrictive for the fishery. As such we are in favor of many of the measures being put forth in the proposed rule.

Specifically for the commercial blacknose shark fishery, a species that is a highly desirable and marketable small coastal shark species due to their superior meat quality, the Council supports removal of the blacknose shark management boundary in the Atlantic region (Preferred Alternative A2) and increasing the commercial retention limit for blacknose sharks (Preferred Alternative B2 or Alternative B3). The current commercial retention of 8 blacknose sharks per person and the management boundary of 34°00' N. latitude, which prohibits harvest north of the boundary, creates unnecessary discards in the commercial shark fishery. Removing this boundary and increasing the commercial trip limit through this proposed rule will reduce waste in the fishery by turning dead discards into landed fish, better utilize the blacknose shark quota, and improve the profitability of commercial shark trips.

For the recreational shark fishery, the Council appreciates that HMS is taking a more species-appropriate approach and is in support of the alternatives being considered that would allow for

an increase in recreational harvest of sharks including Preferred Alternative C4 and Preferred Alternative D2. Adjusting size and retention limits to allow for increased recreational harvest will benefit the recreational sector by turning discards into landings. Additionally, increasing recreational opportunities to target and harvest sharks could also decrease effort on other species managed by the Council and decrease depredation on Council-managed species in some circumstances. Thus, many of the alternatives in this rulemaking, including those currently selected as preferred, would be beneficial for the recreational sector.

The Council appreciates the opportunity to provide our comments and express our support for many of the alternatives being considered in this proposed rule. We look forward to continuing to work with HMS in the future to help implement actions with mutually beneficial outcomes for our managed fisheries. If further information is desired, please reach out to John Carmichael, Executive Director at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Sincerely,

Trish Murphey
Council Chair

cc: SAFMC Members & Staff
Shepherd Grimes, NOAA GC
Heather Blough and Rick DeVactor, NMFS SERO
Clay Porch and John Walter, SEFSC Miami

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