

March 3rd 2026

Dear Mr. Carmichael,

We wanted to follow up after today's HMS presentation on the Proposed Rule for the Recreational Atlantic Shark Fisheries and share a few personal concerns from our perspective as headboat operators.

We respectfully ask that, in the Council's letter to HMS, you consider recommending either keeping Atlantic Sharpnose at the current one fish per person limit or moving to no limit, rather than implementing a four-fish per vessel limit. A four-fish vessel limit simply would not work for boats like ours that regularly carry 30, 40, or even 50 anglers. It would create a situation where a large group of paying passengers are essentially sharing just four fish, which doesn't feel fair or workable.

We also strongly encourage to keep Atlantic Sharpnose at the current no size limit.

As a federally permitted headboat, we report all shark landings through our required electronic logbooks via VESL. The data we submit reflects exactly what is happening on the water, and we are fully accountable for our harvest.

Atlantic Sharpnose are also important to our guests. They are good quality to eat and are one of the only shark species that can be safely landed aboard a large vessel with many passengers on deck. From a safety and operational standpoint, that matters a lot.

We truly appreciate the Council's willingness to listen and consider the realities we face on the water every day. Thank you, as always, for your hard work!

Sincerely,

Captain Nic & Haley Stephens  
Sea Spirit Deep Sea Fishing  
Ponce Inlet, Florida