

**SUMMARY REPORT
FROM THE HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES COMMITTEE**

Atlantic Beach, NC

December 8, 2016

Following approval of the agenda and minutes from the September 2016 meeting, the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Committee completed the following activities:

Presentation on Draft Amendment 5b to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic HMS FMP (dusky sharks)

Guy DuBeck and Steve Durkee, NMFS HMS staff, delivered a presentation to the Committee on Amendment 5b to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan which will implement regulations intended to end overfishing for dusky sharks. Mr. DuBeck explained that even though harvest of dusky sharks has been prohibited for a number of years, mortality occurring from the incidental bycatch of dusky sharks is still leading to overfishing.

After the alternatives within Amendment 5b were presented, Mr. DuBeck explained that comments were being requested from the Council and the public regarding the measures found within the preferred alternatives. The Committee asked HMS staff for further clarification on the recreational and commercial requirements in regards to when they would apply to HMS permit holders and how the requirements may affect permit holders when not targeting sharks. The Committee provided input on the preferred alternatives and how they may be better clarified or improved upon. The Committee made the following motion:

**MOTION #1: SEND LETTER TO HMS STATING COMMENTS FOR 5B.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

Other Business

Council staff brought to the attention of the Committee a letter received from the Southeastern Fisheries Association asking the Committee to request information on the number of vessels possessing a commercial HMS general category permit but not certified as compliant by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) for the safety requirements of a commercial fishing vessel. The Association expressed concern that HMS species are being caught and sold on vessels that are uncertified, thereby creating an inequitable situation for vessel owners that are adhering to the USCG requirements. After input from those on the Committee and Council as well as USCG representatives, it was decided that further research into the potential issue was desired.

Following this discussion, Gregg Waugh, Executive Director of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, presented to the Committee on the proposed China-Bahamas Agricultural and Fisheries Initiative. Additionally, Mr. Waugh reviewed a letter to be sent on

behalf of the Council to Prime Minister Christie expressing gratitude for not further considering the initiative and outlining fisheries that the Council would be concerned about should the initiative have moved forward.

Direction to Staff

- Work with the Council to draft and send a letter to HMS outlining the comments and concerns of the Council in regards to the preferred alternatives in Amendment 5B to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan.
- Work with HMS and the USCG to gather information on the number of vessels with a HMS commercial general category permit in the South Atlantic region but not certified as compliant by the USCG for the safety requirements of a commercial fishing vessel.
- Send the letter regarding the China-Bahamas Agricultural and Fisheries Initiative to the U.S. Department of State with the intention of encouraging the Department to forward the letter to the government of The Bahamas as appropriate.

Timing and Tasks

MOTION #2: APPROVE THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:

- SEND LETTER TO HMS OUTLINING THE COMMENTS AND CONCERNS OF THE COUNCIL IN REGARDS TO THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES IN AMENDMENT 5B TO THE 2006 CONSOLIDATED ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIOR TO THE CLOSE OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ON DECEMBER 22, 2016.
- PREPARE A REPORT ON THE NUMBER OF VESSELS WITH A HMS COMMERCIAL GENERAL CATEGORY PERMIT BUT NOT CERTIFIED AS COMPLIANT BY THE US COAST GUARD FOR THE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS OF A COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL FOR REVIEW BY THE COUNCIL AT THE MARCH 2017 MEETING.
- SEND LETTER REGARDING THE CHINA-BAHAMAS AGRICULTURAL AND FISHERIES INITIATIVE TO THE BAHAMAS AS APPROPRIATE.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL