



National Marine Fisheries Service



FACT SHEET: Mandatory HMS Workshops Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, & Identification Workshops & Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops

The Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP) and the associated final rule (71 FR 58058; October 2, 2006), implements new regulatory requirements for some HMS fishermen and dealers to attend a workshop prior to renewing or obtaining their HMS permit. The new workshop requirements are summarized below. Please see the complete regulatory text, which takes precedence over this information.

Workshop Objectives

Safe Handling, Release, & Identification Workshops:

The objective of these workshops is to provide fishermen with the skills to reduce the mortality of protected species in compliance with the 2003 and 2004 Biological Opinions for the shark and pelagic longline fisheries, respectively. These workshops are designed to educate longline and gillnet fishermen on the proper techniques for safe handling and release of entangled or hooked protected species, such as sea turtles, marine mammals, and smalltooth sawfish. Identification of protected species will also be taught at these workshops in an effort to improve reporting.

Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops:

The objective of these workshops is to reduce the number of unknown and improperly identified sharks reported in the dealer reporting form and increase the accuracy of species specific dealer reported information. Reducing the number of unknown and improperly identified sharks will improve quota monitoring and the data used in stock assessments. These workshops will train shark dealer permit holders or their proxies on how to properly identify Atlantic shark carcasses.

Mandatory Workshop Attendance

Safe Handling, Release, & Identification Workshops:

Vessel owners with a Federal commercial shark or swordfish limited access permit who deploy longline or shark gillnet gear, as well as the vessel operator.

Crew members are not required to attend a workshop; however, if space allows, crew members may attend voluntarily.

Proxies: Vessel owners and operators may not send someone else (i.e., a proxy) instead of attending the workshop themselves.

Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops:

All Federally-permitted shark dealers.

Proxies: Shark dealers may send someone else (i.e., a proxy) to a shark identification workshop, instead of attending themselves. If a dealer decides to send a proxy, then a proxy from each business authorized to receive sharks under the dealer's permit must attend the workshop. A proxy must be a person who is currently employed by a business authorized to receive sharks under the dealer's permit; is a primary participant in the identification, weighing, and/or first receipt of fish as they are offloaded from a vessel; and is involved in filling out dealer reports.

Deadlines & Proof of Workshop Certification

Safe Handling, Release, & Identification Workshops:

Vessel owners and operators that fish with longline or gillnet gear must be certified as having completed a workshop on the safe handling, release, and identification of protected species prior to the owner renewing or transferring a shark or swordfish limited access vessel permit in 2007.

Vessels may not fish unless both the vessel owner and operator workshop certificates are on the vessel, even if the owner is not on board.

Applications for permit renewals or transfers will not be considered complete and a permit will not be issued until the vessel owner's workshop certificate is presented.

Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops:

By December 31, 2007, all Federally-permitted shark dealers must be certified as having completed the shark identification workshop.

Shark dealers with multiple locations authorized to receive sharks under one permit will be issued a separate workshop certificate for each location. After December 31, 2007, a workshop certificate must be available at every location authorized to receive sharks under the dealer's permit.

After December 31, 2007, applications for permit renewals will not be considered complete and a permit will not be issued until a copy (or copies, if multiple locations are authorized to receive sharks) of the shark identification workshop certificate is submitted.

Workshop Certification Renewal

The safe handling, release, and identification workshop certificates and Atlantic shark identification workshop certificates must be renewed every three years prior to the expiration date on the certificate.

Workshop Certificates Are Not Transferable

Anyone interested in receiving an HMS vessel or shark dealer permit must first attend a workshop, obtain a certification, and submit a copy of the certificate with the application to transfer the HMS permit. Workshops will be available to individuals entering the fishery after 2007.

Workshop certificates are not transferable because the person issued the certificate is responsible for knowing the techniques and protocols for the safe handling and release of protected species or the proper identification of Atlantic shark carcasses.

2005 Industry-Sponsored Handling and Release Workshops

Individuals that attended and successfully completed an industry certification workshop on safe handling and release held on either April 8, 2005, in Orlando, FL, or June 27, 2005, in New Orleans, LA, as documented by workshop facilitators, will automatically receive valid protected species safe handling, release, and identification workshop certificate no later than December 31, 2006.

For More Information about the HMS Workshops, please contact the HMS Management Division at 301-713-2347. As soon as the Workshop dates and locations have been scheduled, the details will be posted to the HMS website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/workshops/>.
