

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This 2014 Stock Assessment and Fisheries Evaluation (SAFE) Report is produced by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division. It contains a review of the current status of Atlantic HMS stocks (tunas, swordfish, billfish, and sharks) and describes the year's accomplishments in managing Atlantic HMS. Atlantic HMS SAFE Reports provide the public with information on the latest developments in Atlantic HMS management and fulfill Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requirements.

Since the last HMS SAFE Report (January 2014), the HMS Management Division: held two HMS Advisory Panel meetings; published several rules regarding HMS fisheries, including a proposed rule regarding smoothhound sharks and gillnet fishing for sharks (Draft Amendment 9; 79 FR 56047), a predraft document to consider stock status adjustments for Atlantic sharpnose and bonnethead sharks based on the 2013 SEDAR findings, as well as a range of other management measures for the commercial shark fisheries (Predraft Amendment 6), a final rule implementing regulations for port inspection, at-sea transshipment, and unique vessel identifiers (79 FR 72557), a final rule establishing quotas and opening dates for the 2015 commercial shark fisheries (79 FR 71331), and a final rule implementing an array of bluefin tuna management measures and limited northern albacore provisions (Amendment 7; 79 FR 71510); implemented specifications to adjust quotas for Atlantic bluefin tuna and North and South Atlantic swordfish (79 FR 38255 and 49719, respectively); released the final Atlantic HMS Management-Based Research Needs and Priorities document (79 FR 69097); solicited and reviewed new information for the 5-year review of Atlantic HMS essential fish habitat (EFH); and enacted several inseason actions for HMS.

In November 2014, the 19th Special Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) was held, during which the United States helped develop recommendations to promote the conservation, management, and rebuilding of Atlantic HMS stocks. At this meeting, ICCAT adopted recommendations regarding Western Atlantic and Eastern Atlantic/Mediterranean bluefin tunas; Atlantic shortfin mako sharks; and measures to further enhance fishery monitoring, control, and surveillance.

Several stocks of HMS underwent international stock assessments in 2014: Western Atlantic and Eastern Atlantic/Mediterranean bluefin tuna (both as updates to 2012 assessments), West Atlantic skipjack tuna, and Eastern Atlantic skipjack tuna. NMFS continued shark nursery grounds research and EFH studies through two programs (COASTSPAN and GULFSPAN) along the U.S. Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean.

Much of the data in this report is based on final reports of 2013 data that were completed and/or published in 2014. Domestic fishery landings and bycatch data are presented from the U.S. Annual Report to ICCAT, and directly from NMFS program databases including commercial landings from the HMS and Coastal Fisheries Logbook Programs, the Pelagic Longline and Southeast Gillnet and Bottom Longline Observer Programs, the Electronic Dealer Reporting Program (eDealer) and the Commercial Bluefin Tuna Landings Database; and recreational landings from the Large Pelagics Survey, the Recreational Billfish Survey, and the HMS Recreational Reporting Program. NMFS permits data are presented from the Office of

Science and Technology's International Trade Permit Database, the Northeast and Southeast Regional Permits Offices' Databases, the HMS Permits Database, the HMS Exempted Fishing Permits, Display Permits, and Scientific Research Permits Database, and the HMS Tournament Registration Database.

International landings data are presented from the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics' annual report. International trade data are presented from the National Seafood Inspection Laboratory's Bluefin Tuna Catch Document and Swordfish Statistical Document Programs, the U.S. Census Bureau, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The Regulatory Flexibility Act requires periodic review of existing regulations that had or will have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Thus, consistent with NMFS's plan for this periodic review, this SAFE Report reviews the following regulations: In 2007, Atlantic Commercial Shark Management Measures, Gear Operation and Deployment, and Complementary Closures; U.S. Atlantic Swordfish Fishery Management Measures; and Atlantic Swordfish Quotas; in 2008, the International Trade Permit Program and Bluefin Tuna Catch Documentation Program; Atlantic Shark Management Measures; Renewal of Atlantic Tunas Longline Limited Access Permits and Atlantic Shark Dealer Workshop Attendance Requirements; and Atlantic Tuna Fisheries, Pelagic and Bottom Longline Fisheries, Gear Authorization, and Turtle Control Devices.

Community profiles of the HMS fisheries from the 2010 national census were presented in the 2011 and 2012 SAFE Reports. Impacts to these communities from the major storms in 2013 are presented in this report. Finally, the NMFS Office of Science and Technology has developed tools for social impact analyses, from which the vulnerability or resilience to potential economic disruptions resulting from regulations, social changes, or natural disasters, assessed in 2013, are presented for twenty-five HMS fishing communities.

Feedback and comments on this SAFE Report are encouraged and should be sent to the HMS Management Division, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, phone: (301) 427-8503, fax: (301) 713-1917.

