



NMFS Announces a Combined Final and Emergency Rule to Adjust Quotas, Establish Fishing Seasons in the Atlantic Shark Commercial Fisheries, and to Modify the Mid-Atlantic Shark Closed Area

The Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division adjusts the 2007 first season commercial quotas for large coastal sharks (LCS), small coastal sharks (SCS), and pelagic sharks based on over- or underharvests from the 2006 fishing season, and announces the season opening and closing dates for the first seasons of 2007. Furthermore, NMFS will open the mid-Atlantic shark closed area during the month of July in 2007, pending available quota.

First Season 2007				
Species Group	Region	Opening Date	Closure date	Quota
Large Coastal Sharks- i.e., sandbar, silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, hammerheads (annual quota 1,017 mt dw)	Gulf of Mexico	January 1, 2007	January 15, 2007 11:30 p.m. local time	62.3 mt dw (137,347 lb dw)
	South Atlantic	CLOSED		- 112.9 mt dw (248,899 lb dw)
	North Atlantic	January 1, 2007	April 30, 2007 11:30 p.m. local time	7.9 mt dw (17,416 lb dw)
Small Coastal Sharks- i.e., Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, blacknose, bonnethead (annual quota 454 mt dw)	Gulf of Mexico	January 1, 2007	To be determined, as necessary	15.1 mt dw (33,289 lb dw)
	South Atlantic			308.4 mt dw (679,899 lb dw)
	North Atlantic			18.8 mt dw (41,446 lb dw)
Blue sharks (annual quota 273 mt dw)	No regional quotas	January 1, 2007	To be determined, as necessary	91 mt dw (200,619 lb dw)
Porbeagle sharks (annual quota 92 mt dw)				30.7 mt dw (67,681 lb dw)
Pelagic sharks other than blue or porbeagle (annual quota 488 mt dw)				162.7 mt dw (358,688 lb dw)

During the first season of 2006, the South Atlantic region landed 278.2 percent (393.1 mt dw) of their LCS quota (141.3 mt dw) and 15.6 percent (44.5 mt dw) of their SCS quota (284.6). The Gulf of Mexico also landed 151.1 percent (336.6 mt dw) of their LCS quota (222.8 mt dw) and 527 percent (78 mt dw) of the SCS quota (14.8 mt dw). The North Atlantic region experienced underharvests for both their LCS and SCS quotas (landing approximately 3.8 percent and 0 percent, respectively). As a result of these extensive over- and underharvests in 2006, the Agency is closing the South Atlantic region to directed LCS fishing during the 2007 first season. To allow for a 2007 first season SCS fishery in the Gulf of Mexico region, NMFS has transferred 63.2 mt dw of the South Atlantic's regional SCS underharvest in the 2006 first season. This affords the Gulf of Mexico region its baseline SCS quota of 15.1 mt dw in the 2007 first season.

The draft EA and proposed rule associated with this action (October 5, 2006, 71 FR 58778) considered alternatives to address the overharvest of LCS in the South Atlantic region during the 2006 first season. However, due to the additional landings reports and the overharvest of LCS in



the Gulf of Mexico region during the 2006 first season, two of the five alternatives that were initially analyzed in the draft EA and proposed rule no longer apply. Therefore, NMFS did not consider the alternatives in the final EA and final rule. Additionally, due to the overharvest of LCS and SCS in the Gulf of Mexico region, NMFS analyzed four new alternatives in an emergency rule to address the LCS quota and season length in the Gulf of Mexico region and SCS quotas in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions.

This notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishing actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of Federal Register. For further information on this final and temporary rule for emergency action and its requirements, contact Mike Clark or Karyl Brewster-Geisz at 301-713-2347. Copies of the final and temporary rule for emergency action and final Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review/Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis are available upon request from the Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone: 301-713-2347, fax: 301-713-1917). The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>.



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Date