



NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species

NMFS Announces Closure of the Commercial Gulf of Mexico Aggregated Large Coastal Shark and Gulf of Mexico Hammerhead Shark Management Groups

Commercial shark dealer reports indicate that the landings for the commercial Gulf of Mexico aggregated large coastal shark (LCS) management group have exceeded 80 percent of the available quota. As required by the regulations at 50 CFR 635.28(b)(2), we are closing the commercial Gulf of Mexico aggregated LCS and Gulf of Mexico hammerhead shark management groups as of 11:30 p.m. local time **July 17, 2013**. From the effective date and time of the closure until and if we announce, via a notice in the Federal Register, that additional quota is available and the season is reopened, these management groups will remain closed, even across fishing years.

On July 3, 2013 (78 FR 40318), NMFS announced the final rule for Amendment 5a to the Consolidated Atlantic HMS FMP, which, among other things, established new final adjusted 2013 quotas for aggregated LCS and hammerhead sharks in the Gulf of Mexico region. The Gulf of Mexico aggregated LCS management group quota is 157.5 metric tons (mt) dressed weight (dw) (347,317 lb dw), and the Gulf of Mexico hammerhead shark management group quota is 25.3 metric tons (mt) dressed weight (dw) (55,722 lb dw). In addition, Amendment 5a linked the Gulf of Mexico aggregated LCS and Gulf of Mexico hammerhead shark management groups. This means that when the quota for one management group is reached and is closed, the other management group closes at the same time.

Dealer reports recently received through July 5, 2013, indicate that 128.7 mt dw or 82 percent of the available Gulf of Mexico aggregated LCS quota has been landed, and that 9.2 mt dw or 37 percent of the available Gulf of Mexico hammerhead shark quota has been landed. Based on these dealer reports, NMFS estimates that the 80-percent limit specified for a closure notice in the regulations has been reached or exceeded for the Gulf of Mexico aggregated LCS management group.

During the closure, retention of aggregated LCS and hammerhead sharks in the Gulf of Mexico region is prohibited for persons fishing aboard vessels issued a commercial shark limited access permit under 50 CFR 635.4 — unless the vessel is properly permitted to operate as a charter vessel or headboat for HMS and is engaged in a for-hire trip, in which case the recreational retention limits for sharks and “no sale” provisions apply (50 CFR 635.22(a) and (c)), or if the vessel possesses a valid shark research permit under § 635.32 and a NMFS-approved observer is onboard. A shark dealer issued a permit pursuant to § 635.4 may not purchase or receive aggregated LCS and/or hammerhead sharks in the Gulf of Mexico region from a vessel issued a commercial shark limited access permit, except that a permitted shark dealer or processor may possess aggregated LCS and/or hammerhead sharks in the Gulf of Mexico region that were harvested, off-loaded, and sold, traded, or bartered, prior to the effective date of the closure and were held in storage consistent with § 635.28(b)(5). However, a permitted shark dealer or processor may possess aggregated LCS and/or hammerhead sharks in the Gulf of Mexico region that were harvested by a vessel issued a valid shark research fishery permit per § 635.32 with a

NMFS-approved observer onboard during the trip the sharks were taken on as long as the non-sandbar shark research fishery remains open. Under this closure, a shark dealer issued a permit pursuant to § 635.4 may, in accordance with state regulations, purchase or receive aggregated LCS and/or hammerhead sharks in the Gulf of Mexico region if the sharks were harvested, off-loaded, and sold, traded, or bartered from a vessel that fishes only in state waters and that has not been issued a commercial shark limited access permit, HMS Angling permit, or HMS Charter/Headboat permit pursuant to § 635.4

This notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. For further information on this landings update or the closure, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz or Peter Cooper at 301-427-8503. The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>.

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