



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

NMFS Announces a Closure of the Commercial Non-Sandbar Large Coastal Shark Fishery in the Gulf of Mexico Region

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) projects that the landings for the commercial non-sandbar large coastal shark (LCS) fishery in the Gulf of Mexico region soon will exceed 80 percent of the available quota. As required by NMFS regulations, 50 CFR 635.28(b)(2), NMFS is closing the commercial non-sandbar LCS fishery in the Gulf of Mexico region as of 11:30 p.m. local time **March 17, 2010**. From the effective date and time of the closure until and if NMFS announces, via a notice in the Federal Register, that additional quota is available and the season is reopened, the fishery for that specific quota is closed, even across fishing years.

On January 5, 2010 (75 FR 250), NMFS announced that the non-sandbar LCS fishery for the Gulf of Mexico region for the 2009 fishing year would open on February 4 and the non-sandbar LCS quota would be 390.5 metric tons (mt) dressed weight (dw) (860,896 lb dw). Preliminary dealer reports through the February 28, 2010, reporting period indicate that 216 mt dw or 55 percent of the available quota for non-sandbar LCS has been taken. Based on the rate of fishing indicated in dealer reports for the month of February, NMFS expects that an additional 34 percent of the quota likely will also be taken through March 15, 2010. Based on this projection, the fishery would reach 89 percent of the quota, which exceeds the 80 percent limit specified in the regulations. Accordingly, NMFS is closing the commercial non-sandbar large coastal shark fishery in the Gulf of Mexico region.

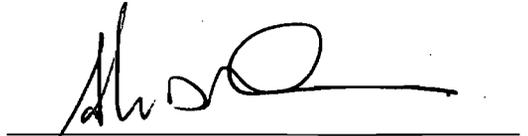
At 50 CFR 635.27(b)(1)(ii), the boundary between the Gulf of Mexico region and the Atlantic region is defined as a line beginning on the east coast of Florida at the mainland at 25°20.4' N. latitude, proceeding due east. Any water and land to the south and west of that boundary is considered, for the purposes of quota monitoring and setting of quotas, to be within the Gulf of Mexico region.

During the closure, fishing vessels issued an Atlantic Shark LAP pursuant to §635.4 may not possess or sell a non-sandbar LCS in the Gulf of Mexico region, except under the conditions specified in §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 non-sandbar LCS in the Gulf of Mexico region from a vessel issued an Atlantic Shark LAP, except that a permitted shark dealer or processor may possess sharks that were harvested, off-loaded, and sold, traded, or bartered, prior to the effective date of the closure and were held in storage. Additionally, a permitted shark dealer or processor may possess non-sandbar sharks that were harvested by a vessel issued a valid shark research permit with a NMFS-approved observer onboard as long as the non-sandbar shark research fishery is open. During this closure, a shark dealer issued a permit pursuant to §635.4 may, in accordance with state regulations, purchase or receive non-sandbar LCS 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 Shark LAP, HMS Angling permit, or HMS Charter/Headboat permit pursuant to §635.4. Additionally, under this closure, a shark



dealer issued a permit pursuant to §635.4 may purchase or receive non-sandbar LCS if the sharks were harvested, off-loaded, and sold, traded, or bartered from a vessel issued a valid shark research permit (per §635.32) that had a NMFS-approved observer on board during the trip sharks were collected.

This notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. For further information on this landings update or the closure, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz or Guý DuBeck at 301-713-2347. The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>.



Alan D. Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

MAR 12 2010

Date

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