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HMS Advisory Panel Wrap-Up (Non-Comprehensive Summary of Comments)

Spring 2021 HMS AP Meeting
May 25-27, 2021

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

- BFT – Bluefin Tuna
- BSIA – Best Scientific Information Available
- CCSB – Commercial Caribbean Small Boat
- EEZ – Exclusive Economic Zone
- EM – Electronic Monitoring
- ET – Electronic Technologies
- ESA – Endangered Species Act
- HMS – Highly Migratory Species
- IBQ – Individual Bluefin Quota
- ICCAT – International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
- LPS – Large Pelagics Survey
- MRIP – Marine Recreational Information Program
- NGO – Non-governmental Organization
- PLL – Pelagic Longline
- RFDs – Restricted-Fishing Days
- SAFE – Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report
- SHARE – Shark Fishery Review
- TSA – Transportation Security Administration
- USCG – United States Coast Guard
- VMS – Vessel Monitoring System



Proposed Rule to Implement General Category Restricted-Fishing Days (RFDs) for 2021 Fishing Year

- Support for/opposition to the proposed 2021 RFDs.
- Support for implementing RFDs in 2021 as a one-year pilot program.
- Support for starting RFDs June 1.
- Opposition to proposing RFDs while also increasing the General category retention limit for June-August from to 3 fish/day.
- Requests to not implement RFDs on dates of registered BFT tournaments.
- Requests to re-evaluate whether RFDs are needed for the 2021 fishing year, including consideration of negative economic impacts on General category and HMS Charter/Headboat permitted vessels.
- Question about whether General category fishermen could fish for other species on RFDs.



Amendment 13 – Bluefin Tuna

Pelagic longline measures:

- Frustration that earlier comments were not reflected in proposed measures, and that the proposed IBQ measures would force fishermen to maximize landings of any tuna and swordfish rather than focus on high quality products.
- Regarding IBQ allocations, various comments on the metrics, use of tiers, and accounting for quota debt.
- Electronic monitoring measures: lack of support for proposed boom and mat; create flexibility for methods of data transfer.

Angling category measures:

- Discussion and ideas expressed regarding Trophy category geographic areas including the creation of a Gulf of Maine Trophy area as proposed.
- Need for more quota for the Angling category generally and the trophy fishery specifically.

Purse Seine category measures:

- Support for removing the Purse Seine category and reallocating the Purse Seine category quota.
- Discussion about whether to reallocate only to directed categories, as proposed, or include the Longline category.



Proposed Rule to Implement Federal Atlantic Tunas Regulations in Maine State Waters

Questions about:

- Whether the proposed rule, if finalized, would affect required safety requirements inside of state waters (regarding the U.S. Coast Guard requirements)
- Whether other coastal states are in the same situation as Maine
- If, from an enforcement perspective, these states would be obligated to enforce Federal regulations



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Shark Fishery Review (SHARE)

- Ensure that both the population status of sharks and the need to conserve sharks are a focus.
- Optimum yield, changes to the retention limits, and increasing the value of the commercial fishery should be a priority.
- Need more stock assessments (bull, lemon, and spinner sharks) and implement the appropriate quotas from recent assessments (blacktip and sandbar sharks).
- Discussion on shortfin mako shark regulations and impacts to fishermen and tournaments.
- Discussion on mitigation techniques and current/upcoming ~~of~~ shark depredation research.
- International agreements and state laws are not "other" factors; discussion of them needs to be integrated throughout the document.



Swordfish and Shark Retention Limit Rule – Final Management Measures

- Support final measures as they promote compliance and offer additional fishing opportunities.
- Partner with NGOs when carrying out outreach efforts in the U.S. Caribbean.
- Clarify that the retention of Caribbean reef sharks is not allowed under the HMS CCSB permit.
- Do not couple HMS management of the U.S. Caribbean region with other regions, but rather manage the U.S. Caribbean region based on its local fisheries dynamics.
- Consider ways to facilitate swordfish harvest in other fisheries, including recreational and pelagic longline fisheries.
- Need to inform the public on the healthy condition of the North Atlantic swordfish stock.



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90-day Finding on a Petition to List the Shortfin Mako Shark as Threatened or Endangered under ESA

- Concern expressed that shortfin mako will be found to be threatened if a distinct population segment is designated for the entire north Atlantic.
- Biggest impairment to shortfin mako is J-hooks and wire leaders other countries are using, not what is happening in the United States .
- U.S. needs to put pressure on ICCAT to enforce mortality reduction procedures on other countries.
- Listing under ESA will only effect U.S. fishermen, who have already reduced mortality by 85 percent. Listing could weaken the U.S. position at ICCAT.



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Best Scientific Information Available (BSIA)

- Decision making process difficult to understand – need concise public outreach and descriptions of stock assessment processes.
- Questions on SAFE Report, MRIP, and dolphinfish assessments.
- More detail needed on “External” assessments –
 - What does it mean? What does it include? When is it used?
 - It can be an important option.



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Electronic Technologies (ET) Implementation Plan

- Support for consolidated vessel reporting and an interest in ensuring it is as simple as possible. Support for one-stop reporting but feel in its current form it is currently too cumbersome.
- Some support for electronic monitoring (EM) tools as they can be useful data collection processes but there is concern about scope creep, especially since HMS is exploring EM beyond the pelagic longline fleet.
- Concern that as ET use continues to grow, so does the burden. If ET use in HMS fisheries is going to continue to increase, it needs to benefit industry too.
- Support for the ET implementation plan as it is a quality overview of current program and helps outline future goals and objectives.



2021 Economic Situation Report

Commercial Fishery

- Request for the inclusion of HMS seafood import volumes in the next report to examine its impacts on the HMS market.
- Interest in more refined monthly bluefin tuna price data and the range of prices paid by region.
- Pelagic longline fleet had to focus on high grade swordfish and avoid yellowfin tuna based on market demand.
- Need to also consider increased operating costs, especially for bait.
- Bad weather to blame for effort reductions in early 2021.



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2021 Economic Situation Report

Recreational Fishery

- Consider change in tournament vessel participation, not just number of registered tournaments.
- Many for-hire trips were taken by in-state anglers that spent less money in coastal communities than tourists, especially in New England.
- Florida Keys were shut down for two months to all tourism.
- Increased effort from new inexperienced participants reduced catch rates, which could complicate catch estimation.
- Louisiana saw an increase in private and charter effort over the summer, but was tempered by impacts of seven named tropical storms.
- Private anglers are returning to work, so effort should go back down.



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Paul Doremus and Samuel Rauch: Leadership Update

- Regarding 30 x 30 conservation plan:
 - Do not want to get ahead of ICCAT; it will be hard to protect HMS species
 - Fixed area closures would not make sense for HMS, particularly given complexities of potential climate impacts
- Put more scientific effort into addressing sharks with unknown status



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Deepwater Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration Project Update

- Concerns that experimental fishing methods are attempting to replace pelagic longline gear.
- Concern that participating vessels are not able to lease their IBQ to other vessels.
- Would like better definitions of bycatch in the future, as the pelagic longline fleet has done a lot to reduce bycatch.
- In relation to research fishing gear, would like to know relative cost per pound of fish to better inform how to advertise this gear to fishermen.



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HMS USCG Fisheries Enforcement Overview

- Confusion about rules regarding going into the Bahamas exclusive economic zone (EEZ) for fishing and where the boundary is.
- Concerns regarding Mexican fishing boats in U.S. EEZ.
 - When those boats are caught, does their catch count against U.S. quotas?
- Concern about Mexico encouraging illegal fishing in U.S. waters, and what is being done about that.
- Would like better vessel tracking by requiring photo evidence of boat identification numbers on the side of the vessel.



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