



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

FEB 10 2009

Dear Consulting Party or Marine Fisheries Commission:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) plans to amend the Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP). New management measures are anticipated to be in place by early 2010. Under §304(g)(1)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), NMFS is required to consult with affected Fishery Management Councils, ICCAT commissioners and advisory groups, and the Advisory Panels established under the Magnuson-Stevens Act regarding amendments to the FMPs. As one of the initial steps in this process, we are requesting your comments on the enclosed Predraft of Amendment 3 to the Consolidated HMS FMP. The FMP amendment would implement new management measures to rebuild blacknose sharks, which are overfished with overfishing occurring, and shortfin mako sharks, which are experiencing overfishing. An electronic version of the attached document is also available on the HMS Management Division's website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>.

The Predraft is intended to generate discussion about management alternatives and potential actions. It includes a summary of shark management history, the purpose and need of the amendment, a summary of the management alternatives being considered at this time, and their potential impacts on the human environment. Alternatives may be modified, removed, or supplemented based on comments received and additional analyses. NMFS specifically solicits your opinions and advice on the range of alternatives and if there are additional alternatives that should be considered. Additionally, NMFS requests comment on the impacts described for the alternatives.

NMFS will also ask the Fishery Management Councils and Marine Fisheries Commissions for an opportunity to discuss this Predraft document, the upcoming Draft Fishery Management Plan and Proposed Rule package, or any other related HMS issue at their upcoming meetings. Please contact Jackie Wilson (240-338-3936) or Karyl Brewster-Geisz (301-713-2347) to discuss scheduling.

Any written comments on the Predraft should be submitted to Karyl Brewster-Geisz, HMS Management Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or faxed to 301-713-1917 by **March 16, 2009**. For further information or hard copies of the enclosed document, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz at 301-713-2347 or Jackie Wilson at 240-338-3936.

Thank you in advance for your comments.

Sincerely,

Margo Schurze-Haugen
Chief, Highly Migratory Species
Management Division