



NOAA
FISHERIES

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Division



Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) include some of the most prized sport fish species in the world, including blue and white marlin; bluefin, yellowfin, and bigeye tuna; sailfish; sharks; and swordfish. These species support recreational fisheries in waters of the western Atlantic Ocean from Maine to Texas including the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. Unlike other recreational fisheries managed under the regional council process, the Atlantic HMS Management Division oversees all aspects of HMS recreational and commercial fisheries management, including implementation of regulations and initiation of operational actions, such as catch and size limits, permitting, quota implementation and monitoring, and data collection. In 2017, the Atlantic HMS Management Division issued approximately 20,000 Atlantic HMS Angling permits and more than 3,600 Atlantic HMS Charter/Headboat permits. Additionally, an average of 260 Atlantic HMS tournaments take place each year (2003–2017), which affects several HMS species, especially blue and white marlin, sailfish, and yellowfin tuna. HMS tournaments can range from small club events to massive week-long events that attract hundreds of vessels, and award prizes in the millions of dollars. In 2018, the White Marlin Open in Ocean City, Maryland, attracted more than 300 vessels and awarded nearly \$5 million in prizes.

NOAA Fisheries' goal of improving recreational fishing opportunities for Atlantic HMS is largely supported through ensuring the health of target fish stocks. For internationally managed Atlantic HMS, NOAA Fisheries implements quotas for some species as adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of

Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). Use of these quotas by recreational and commercial components of the fisheries can have mutual benefits for recreational and commercial fishermen if the United States maintains its international quota shares. For example, NOAA Fisheries recently increased its baseline quota for Western Atlantic bluefin tuna by 18 percent based on the results of recent ICCAT stock assessments, which provided additional fishing opportunities for U.S. fishermen. NOAA Fisheries also modified its recreational size limit regulations to allow retention of bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack tuna damaged by predators, like sharks, in response to feedback from the recreational community. Fisheries management depends on effective implementation of measures, and an important part of effective implementation comes from anglers who are motivated and understand the science and rationale behind those measures. Communication and engagement are integral to developing an informed and motivated recreational constituency.

Establish a visible agency presence among the recreational fishing community

Establishing a visible presence with fishermen is an important step in building and maintaining trust. Fisheries management is most effective when fishermen understand the management, regulatory, and permitting processes, and when they can get the information they need.

Strategy	Action
<p>Actively engage Atlantic HMS recreational fisheries stakeholders on the ground, on the water, and online (put a face/voice to agency actions).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMS and their NOAA Fisheries partners will continue to participate in fishing and boating shows such as The Saltwater Fishing Expo (Edison, NJ), Saco Bay Tackle Spring Seminar (Saco, ME), Canyon Runner Tuna/Marlin Seminar Series (Long Island, NY), National Saltwater Fishing Seminar (Providence RI, Tampa FL). • Connect with anglers on the waterfront through NOAA Fisheries port agents - HMS will continue to engage with the port agents to ensure they are up to date on HMS management and regulations. HMS staff will join port agents in the field when available to personally engage anglers on the waterfront regarding HMS rules/regulations. • Connect and openly communicate with recreational constituents via speaking engagements with fishing clubs, yacht clubs, tournament captain’s meetings, and other venues. HMS staff and NOAA Fisheries port agents also attend tournaments to connect with anglers directly. Recent examples have included the White Marlin Open, Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic, Mako Mania, and the Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament. • Connect with local outdoor media on recreational fisheries issues - HMS staff actively engage both local and national media outlets, such as Billfish Magazine, Saltwater Sportsman, and On the Water on issues that are associated (directly or indirectly) with the recreational fisheries. • Post recreational fisheries content online (e.g., Fishing Fridays via NOAA Fisheries’ Twitter account). • HMS will refresh and expand electronic communications with recreational anglers via the HMS listserv and NOAA Fisheries social media to better communicate changes in fisheries regulations. • Distribute print materials (e.g., compliance and ID guides, stickers).

Develop mutual understanding of priorities, concerns, and challenges

Atlantic HMS management is complex at the international, national, and state/territory levels. To achieve effective fisheries management, it is critical that fishermen understand the priorities and challenges at various levels that influence decision making. It is imperative for the agency to effectively communicate with fishermen to engage with them constructively.

Strategy	Action
Seek and create opportunities for consistent open dialog with the recreational community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly engage recreational fisheries constituents and other stakeholders via an annual Atlantic HMS Recreational Fisheries Roundtable held in conjunction with a HMS Advisory Panel meeting. • Engage recreational fisheries constituents and other stakeholders on international fisheries management issues via active participation with the ICCAT Advisory Committee and other means such as education/outreach through media outlets. • Conduct scoping meetings, public hearings, and webinars to engage the public, including recreational fishermen, and obtain input on federal fisheries management actions. • Conduct outreach to Atlantic HMS tournaments including distribution of regulatory compliance guides and other products to help fishermen enjoy their time on the water. This effort may also include increasing fishermen awareness of topics such as the need to minimize their impacts on the environment, and to avoid damaging scientific data collection equipment (e.g., data buoys).

Enhance collaboration with the recreational fishing community

Recreational fishermen are important partners and the information, expertise, and on-the-water knowledge they contribute is an asset to the agency and a vital part of the management of Atlantic HMS. Recreational fishermen are interested in learning more about the status and management of the resources they enjoy. NOAA Fisheries can use their knowledge to further our knowledge of Atlantic HMS and improve management.

Strategy	Action
Identify and pursue opportunities to jointly address challenges facing recreational fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit participation from recreational fishermen in the Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Program. https://www.iccat.int/aottp/en/ • Promote the Cooperative Shark Tagging Program through the NEFSC Apex Predator Program. https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsc/Narragansett/sharks/tagging.html • Collaborate with NGOs to recruit participation from recreational fishermen in the Atlantic billfish Cooperative Tagging Center. https://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/species/fish/tagging.htm • Collaborate with the recreational members of the ICCAT IAC when addressing HMS challenges at the international level that may affect this sector. • Maintain five percent observer coverage at Atlantic billfish tournaments in accordance with ICCAT requirement. • Actively engage at ICCAT where challenges are being addressed at the international level in addition to our domestic work. • Seek ways to support citizen science involving HMS where appropriate.

Management of HMS fisheries is unique and complex, and requires continual two-way communication with fishermen. The actions listed in this plan will help the Atlantic HMS Management Division better understand and address the needs of the Atlantic HMS recreational fishery. The Division will continue to integrate recreational considerations into the management of tunas, sharks, swordfish, and billfish and provide for sustainable recreational fishing opportunities.

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