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HMS Advisory Panel Wrap-Up

Spring 2020 HMS AP Meeting

May 19, 2020

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

- AP – Advisory Panel
- CCSB – Commercial Caribbean Small Boat permit
- CHB – Charter/Headboat
- HMS – Highly Migratory Species
- IBQ – Individual Bluefin Quota
- ICCAT – International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
- OLE – Office of Law Enforcement
- PLL – Pelagic Longline
- USCG – US Coast Guard
- SGC – Swordfish General Commercial permit



Overview of AP Meeting

- This was the first fully virtual meeting of the HMS AP.
- AP presentations that were informational are not detailed here.
 - Overview
 - 2019 ICCAT summary
 - Law enforcement update
- The AP and public comments presented here are high-level summaries; full transcripts are available.



2020 Fisheries Economic Situation Report

- Agreement with the conclusions of the presentation.
- Appreciation for acknowledgement of these ongoing issues.
- Request for relaxation of landings restrictions to allow fleets to make up for losses in landings and revenue.
- Request for inclusion of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands in future assessment efforts.



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Swordfish and Shark Retention Limits

Proposed Rule

Swordfish retention limits:

- Support for preferred alternative and higher retention limits.
- Concern about lack of vessel monitoring systems for SGC vessels.
- Suggestion to consider giving greater access to PLL vessels.
- Note that CCSB vessels cannot accommodate >6 swordfish.

Shark retention limits:

- Suggestions to allow retention of all non-prohibited sharks other than hammerheads and pelagic sharks.
- Concern about using Gulf of Mexico quota; create separate Caribbean quota.



NOAA Fisheries Leadership Update

- Question about allowing PLL fishing for swordfish in gear closure areas.
- Interest in increasing fall 2020 retention limits for CHB.
- Questions about NOAA Fisheries' role regarding federal fin-ban legislation.
- Desire to increase public engagement to clarify fishing industry misconceptions about the American fishing industry.
- Positive feedback and request for budgetary support for Cooperative Shark Tagging Program.
- Concerns about competition with foreign seafood products from fisheries that do not meet U.S. standards.
- Concerns regarding U.S. recreational fishermen illegally catching yellowfin tuna in Bahamian waters and not receiving citations.



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Bluefin Tuna Update

- Domestic and global markets will not support a high volume of tuna landings. Need to think about implications.
- Consider flexibilities, including:
 - Allowing vessel owners to obtain dealer permits (noting however that strict state dealer permit requirements are likely to apply).
 - Permit/authorized gear use considerations.
- The PLL industry needs fast solutions. Looking forward to CARES Act implementation.
- Concerns about mortality associated with catch and release/tag and release when the General category is closed. Suggestions for increased outreach on safe release.
- How would restricted-fishing days work if implemented once again? Applicable to HMS Charter/Headboat permitted vessels as well as General category?



Public Comments

- All weak hook rules are redundant because of the IBQ program.
- Desire to participate in tuna General category and swordfish handgear fisheries with flexibility to switch between rod and reel and buoy gear.
- Not-enough enforcement of recreational boats running out to the Bahamas. Perception that fishermen posting illegal activities give all fishermen a bad reputation. Concern about underreporting yellowfin tuna and illegal HMS sales.
- Question about the differences in USCG and OLE districts and how that impacts enforcement.
- Request to reconsider regulations that require vessels to remove gillnet or longline gear before getting other permits.
- Concern about FDA adding swordfish to list of histamine producing fishes.
- Note that industry sponsored proper release seminars have been stopped because of gathering restrictions.



Looking Ahead

Swordfish and Shark Retention Limits Proposed Rule:

- Public hearings May 27 and June 10.
- Comment period ends on June 26.

Coming soon:

- Draft Amendment 12 (National Policies, etc.).
- Draft Amendment 13 (Bluefin tuna).
- Draft Amendment 14 (Shark Allowable Biological Catch Control Rule, etc.).

Next AP meeting:

- To be held in early September.
- Specific date and details TBD.
- Possible multi-day virtual meeting.



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