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Tab M-4a

# **Proposed Rule to Revise Commercial Atlantic Blacknose Shark & Recreational Atlantic Shark Fisheries Management Measures**

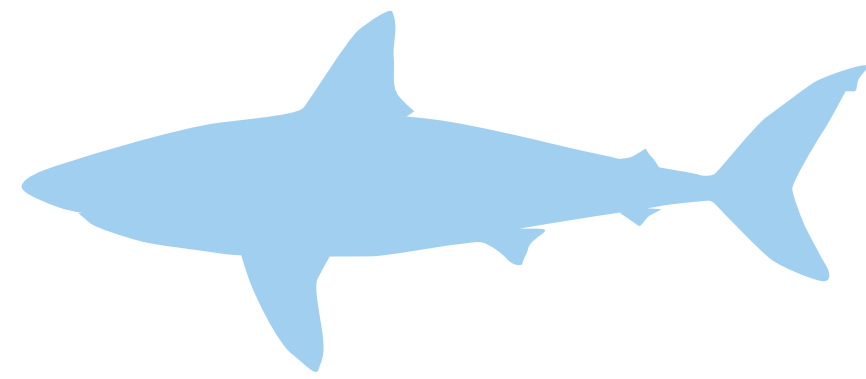
**Atlantic Highly Migratory Species  
Gulf Council Meeting  
April 2026**

# Outline



- Purpose & Need for Action
- Background
- Proposed Measures & Alternatives
  - Commercial Fishery
  - Recreational Fishery
- Anticipated Timing
- Request for Public Comments

# Purpose & Need for Action



## Purpose of rulemaking:

- Increase management flexibility to react to additional factors affecting Atlantic shark fisheries
- Optimize the ability of the commercial and recreational shark fisheries to harvest available quota to the extent practicable

## Need: To be responsive to -

- The framework for implementing management measures established in Amendment 14
- Findings from the Atlantic Shark Fishery Review (SHARE) document
- Some of the public comments from scoping for Amendment 16
- Recent domestic laws and international agreements that are having direct and indirect effects on the commercial fishery



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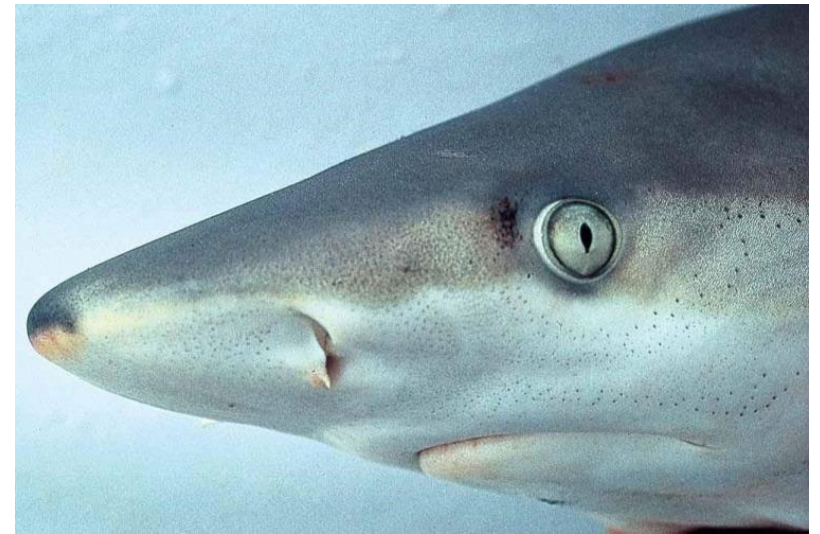
# Background - Commercial Fishery

**2010:** SouthEast Data Assessment Review assesses **blacknose sharks** (SEDAR 21)

- Atlantic stock: overfished with overfishing occurring
- Gulf of America stock: unknown

**2013:** Amendment 5a to the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP)

- Created regional (Atlantic and Gulf) blacknose and non-blacknose small coastal shark quotas
- Established regional quota linkages between management groups

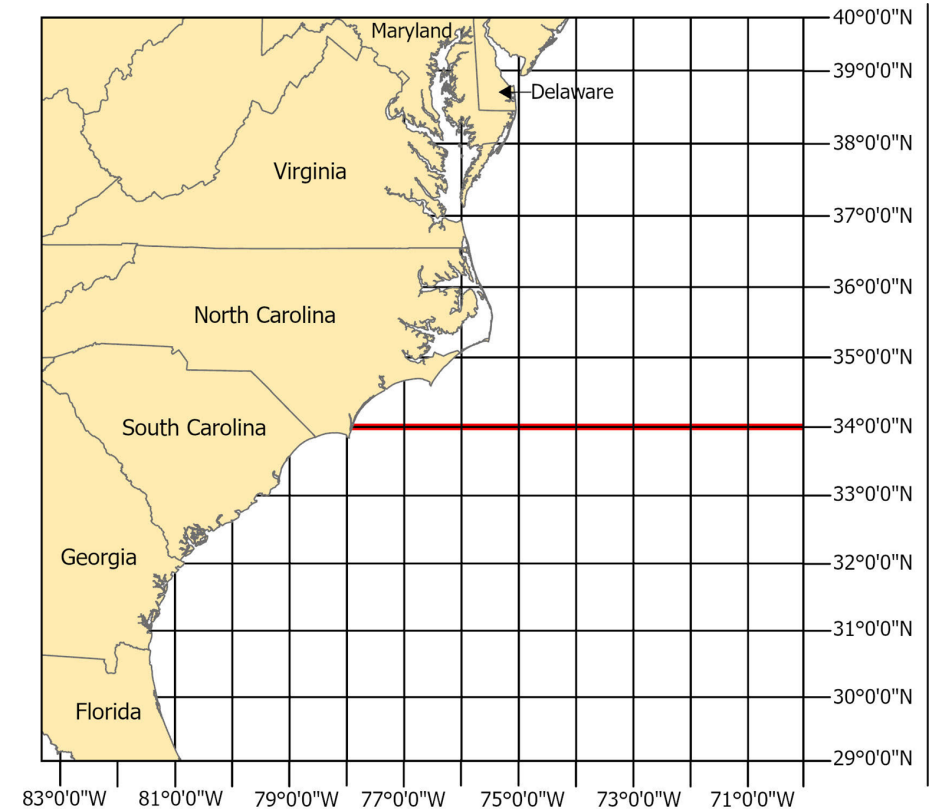


# Background - Commercial Fishery

## 2015: Amendment 6 to the HMS FMP

- Established a management boundary in the Atlantic region along N lat. 34°00' (approximately Wilmington, North Carolina)

**2017:** Established a commercial retention limit of 8 blacknose sharks for all Directed and Incidental shark limited access permit holders



# Background - Recreational Fishery

## 1999: 1999 FMP for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks

- Established a recreational minimum size limit for most shark species of 54 inches (137 cm) fork length (FL)
- Reduced recreational retention limits for all sharks to one shark per vessel per trip

## 2008: Amendment 2 to the HMS FMP

- Expanded the shark species authorized for recreational retention and modified recreational retention limits
- One Atlantic sharpnose shark and one bonnethead shark per person per trip with no minimum size
- One per vessel per trip for all other authorized shark species greater than 54 inches (137 cm) FL

## 2013: Amendment 5a to the HMS FMP

- Revised the recreational minimum size limit for all hammerhead sharks to 78 inches (198.1 cm) FL

## 2015: Amendment 9 to the HMS FMP

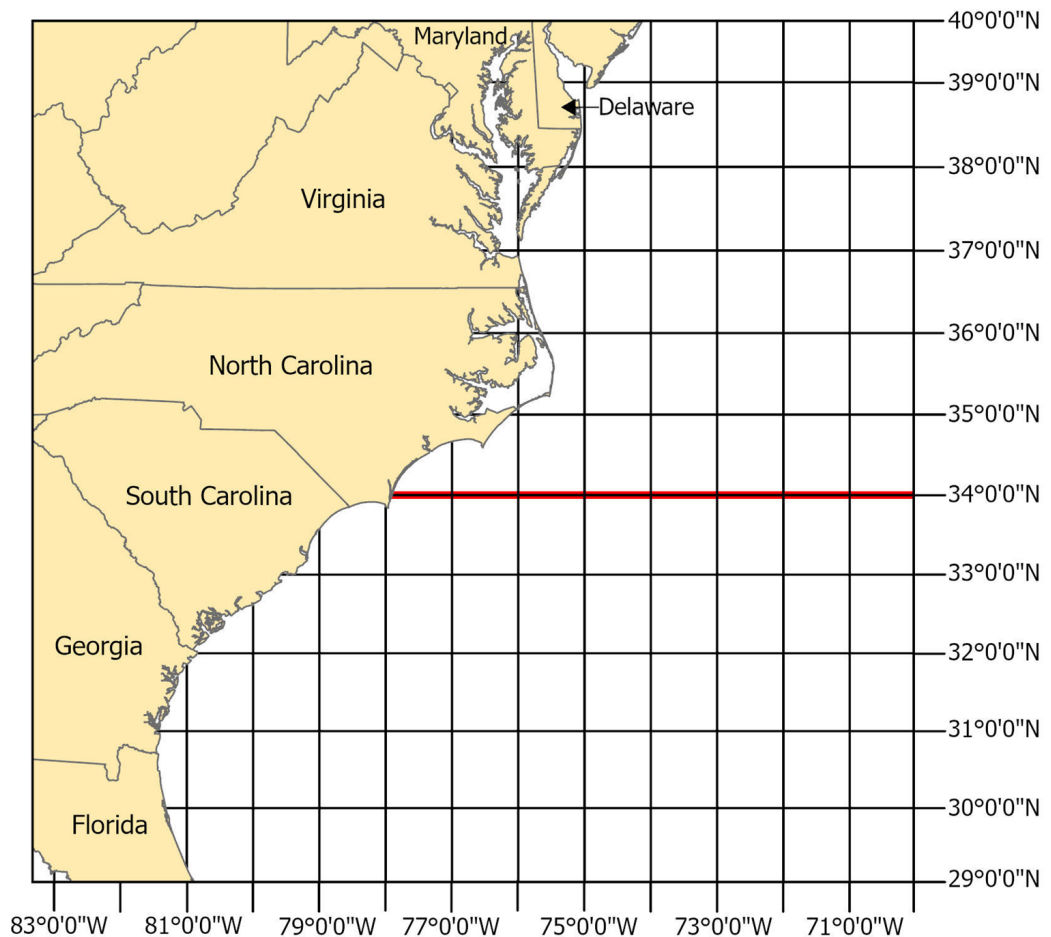
- Established no recreational retention limit for smoothhound sharks with no minimum size limit

# Commercial Shark Fishery



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# Blacknose Shark Management Boundary



**Alternative A1:** Keep the blacknose shark management boundary - *no action*

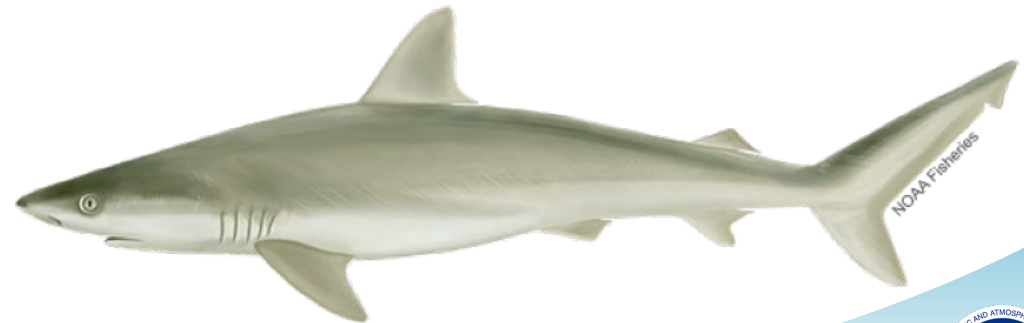
**Alternative A2:** Remove the blacknose shark management boundary - *preferred*

# Blacknose Shark Commercial Retention Limit

**Alternative B1:** Keep the current commercial retention limit for blacknose sharks (8 blacknose sharks per vessel per trip) - *no action*

**Alternative B2:** Establish a flexible commercial retention limit of 0 to 60 blacknose sharks with a default limit of 25 blacknose sharks per vessel per trip - *preferred*

**Alternative B3:** Remove the commercial retention limit for blacknose sharks



# Recreational Shark Fishery



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# Current Recreational Minimum Size Limits



## Current minimum size limits:

- All sharks, unless otherwise specified, must be at least 54 inches (137 cm) FL
- All hammerhead sharks (other than bonnethead sharks) must be at least 78 inches (198.1 cm) FL
- There is no size limit for Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, or smoothhound sharks

# Shark Species Female Size at Maturity

Species	Size at Maturity (FL) (inches (cm))	Species	Size at Maturity (FL) (inches (cm))
Atlantic sharpnose	25 (63.5)	Hammerhead, great	81 (205.7)
Blacknose	34 (86.4)	Hammerhead, scalloped	72 (182.9)
Blacktip	48 (121.9)	Hammerhead, smooth	79 (200.7)
Blue	73 (185.4)	Lemon	76 (193)
Bonnethead	29 (73.7)	Nurse	89 (226.1)
Bull	75 (190.5)	Porbeagle	82 (208.3)
Common thresher	83 (236.2)	Smoothhound	35 (88.9)
Finetooth	40 (101.6)	Spinner	59 (149.9)
		Tiger	103 (261.6)



# Recreational Minimum Size Limits

**Alternative C1:** Keep the current recreational minimum size limits - *no action*

**Alternative C2:** Establish recreational minimum size limits for sharks based on each species' female size at maturity

**Alternative C3:** Establish recreational minimum size limits for shark groups based on grouped species' female sizes at maturity

**Alternative C4:** Establish flexible recreational minimum size limits for shark groups based on grouped species' female sizes at maturity - *preferred*

**Alternative C5:** Remove recreational minimum size limits

*\* This action would not consider changes to regulations for prohibited sharks or shortfin mako sharks*

# Recreational Minimum Size Limits Under Preferred Alternative C4

Shark Group	Minimum Size Limit (FL) (inches (cm))	
	Range	Default
Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, and smoothhound	Up to 54 (137.2), or no limit	No limit
Blacknose and finetooth	Up to 54 (137.2), or no limit	38 (96.5)
Blacktip and spinner	Up to 70 (177.8), or no limit	48 (121.9)
Great hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead	Up to 115 (292.1), or no limit	78 (198.1)
Bull, lemon, nurse, and tiger	Up to 115 (292.1), or no limit	54 (137.2)
Blue, common thresher, and porbeagle	Up to 95 (241.3), or no limit	54 (137.2)



# Current Recreational Retention Limits

## Current retention limits:

- One shark from the following list per vessel per trip: Atlantic blacktip, Gulf blacktip, bull, great hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, smooth hammerhead, lemon, nurse, spinner, tiger, blue, thresher, porbeagle, Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, Atlantic blacknose, Gulf blacknose, and bonnethead
- One Atlantic sharpnose shark and one bonnethead shark per person per trip
- There is no limit for smoothhound sharks

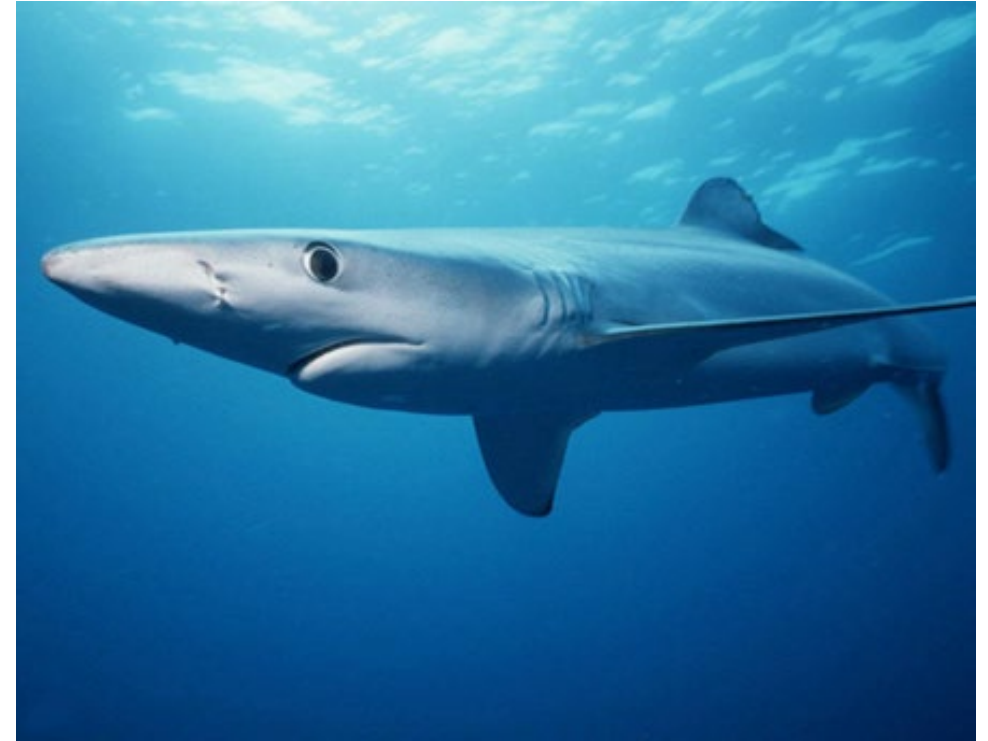


# Recreational Retention Limits

**Alternative D1:** Keep the current recreational retention limits - *no action*

**Alternative D2:** Establish flexible recreational retention limits for sharks - *preferred*

**Alternative D3:** Remove recreational retention limits for sharks



*\* This action would not consider changes to regulations for prohibited sharks or shortfin mako sharks*

# Recreational Retention Limits Under Preferred Alternative D2

Shark Species	Recreational Retention Limit (Sharks/Vessel/Trip)	
	Range	Default
Sharks from the following list: blacknose, blue, bull, common thresher, finetooth, great hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, smooth hammerhead, lemon, nurse, porbeagle, spinner, and tiger	Up to 3, or no limit	1
Atlantic sharpnose	Up to 4, or no limit	1
Bonnethead	Up to 4, or no limit	1
Blacktip	Up to 5, or no limit	1
Smoothhound	Up to 4, or no limit	No limit



# Miscellaneous Regulatory Changes



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# Commercial Management Group Quota Linkages

- Remove commercial management group quota linkages
- In Amendment 14, NOAA Fisheries approved a management option to remove commercial management group quota linkages to allow fisheries to remain open all year and ensure that each shark management group or species' quota is fully utilized
- Once an annual catch limit is reached, NOAA Fisheries would close that fishery to prevent overharvest

## Management groups that are currently linked:

- Atlantic: hammerhead sharks and aggregated large coastal sharks
- Eastern Gulf of America: hammerhead sharks and aggregated large coastal sharks
- Western Gulf of America: hammerhead sharks and aggregated large coastal sharks
- Atlantic: blacknose sharks and non-blacknose small coastal sharks

# Other Miscellaneous Regulatory Changes



- Clarify some of the existing references to thresher shark in the regulations to specify which species of thresher shark (common or bigeye) the regulations apply
- Update the name of the management group “pelagic sharks other than blue or porbeagle” to “common thresher and shortfin mako (when authorized) sharks”
- Remove references to oceanic whitetip sharks in commercial fishery regulations

# Anticipated Timing & Request for Public Comments

- The proposed rule published on January 5, 2026 (91 FR 215)
- Comment period extended on February 25, 2026 (91 FR 9237)
- Written comment must be received by May 29, 2026
- Submit comments at <https://www.regulations.gov>
  - Search “NOAA-NMFS-2024-0039”
- The final rule is expected in late 2026

## Reg Action Webpage:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/proposed-rule-revisions-commercial-atlantic-blacknose-and-recreational-atlantic-shark>



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# Comments to Date

## Atlantic Blacknose Shark:

- Overall support for the preferred management measures to optimize quotas and reduce regulatory discards

## Recreational Shark Fishing:

- General support for creating management flexibility and establishing size limits based on size at maturity
- Some concern that NOAA Fisheries could adjust minimum size and retention limits without prior notification or frequently; concern that states may not be able to make parallel changes
- Some questions regarding the proposed shark groupings, the scientific basis for the proposed changes, and how the proposed changes would work
- Suggestions to keep “per person” retention limits for Atlantic sharpnose shark and bonnethead shark retention limits



# Questions?

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