

Migratory Species Committee Report
April 7, 2026
Dr. Kesley Banks, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab M, No. 1**) and approved the minutes (**Tab M, No. 2**) of the June 2024 meeting.

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Proposed Rule on Shark Management Measures (Tab M, Nos. 4a-c)

HMS staff provided a presentation on a proposed rule which considers modifications to commercial and recreational regulations for several shark species. Several Committee members stated that using a dynamic approach for a size limit ranging from no size limit up to some maximum value was difficult to interpret for the average angler. As an example, for some sharks, the minimum size limit outlined in the alternative would be greater than ever recorded for that species. HMS staff replied that the goal of the action was to make shark size and retention limits consistent across several species. He continued that applying an individual size limit to each managed shark species causes confusion for anglers, especially when those species are difficult to tell apart. A Committee member noted that the recreational size limit action grouped spinner and blacktip shark species together since they are morphologically similar but separated those species when proposing alternatives for retention limits.

Several Committee members indicated that recreational shore fishing for sharks is popular in their states. Another member stated that headboats based in Texas often target shark species. To reduce confusion for anglers, states often adopt federal regulations for sharks in state waters and the alternatives in the proposed rule could affect state rules as well if consistency is maintained. Another Committee member noted that Purpose and Need statement included language to:

“optimize the ability of the commercial and recreational shark fisheries to harvest available quota to the extent practicable”

which contrasts with implementing retention limits for prolific shark species such as Atlantic sharpnose and bonnethead sharks. The Committee was reminded that the comment period for the proposed rule has been extended to May 29, 2026. The Committee was encouraged to review the draft comment letter available in the briefing book (**Tab M No. 4b**). Any substantial edits to the letter should be provided by full Council and presented for inclusion in the draft letter.

Update on Modifying HMS Charter/For-hire Electronic Reporting (Tab M, Nos. 5a and b)

HMS staff indicated that their office was working on the final rule for modifying HMS electronic reporting and that it was possible it could be published before the end of 2026. She continued that part of the reason the publication is taking so long is that HMS is aware of ongoing electronic reporting efforts in the southeast and is working towards the goal of one-stop reporting. She mentioned that she would also speak to others in her office about the availability of budget for the electronic programs.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.