

GULF COUNCIL

MIGRATORY SPECIES COMMITTEE

The Battle House Renaissance Mobile, Alabama & Virtual

April 7, 2026

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1 The Migratory Species Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
2 The Battle House Renaissance in Mobile, Alabama on Tuesday
3 afternoon, April 7, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman
4 Kesley Banks.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF JUNE 2024 MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN KESLEY BANKS:** This is Migratory Species Committee. The
11 committee members are myself, Dr. Overton as vice chair, Ms.
12 Ballard, Captain Frady, Mr. Marquez, Dr. Sweetman, Mr. Schieble,
13 Mr. Osborne, Mr. Geeslin, Mr. Sanchez, and Captain Walker.

14
15 We will start with the adoption of the agenda. Is there anything
16 to add to the agenda? Seeing none, I will entertain a motion to
17 adopt the agenda as-is. I got multiple yeses, and so is there any
18 opposition to this? Seeing none, moving forward, and is there any
19 changes to the meeting minutes from June 2024? Seeing none, is
20 there a motion to accept the minutes as-is? Thank you, Captain
21 Walker. Dr. Sweetman seconds. All right. Dr. Hollensead, would
22 you like to join us for the action guide?

23
24 **ATLANTIC HMS PROPOSED RULE ON SHARK MANAGEMENT MEASURES**
25

26 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and thank you, Madam Chair, and so
27 there's two agenda items before the Migratory Species Committee.
28 The first will be a presentation on the Atlantic Highly Migratory
29 Species, or HMS, proposed rule on shark management measures, and
30 s, if you recall, at our January meeting, there was some discussion
31 of a proposed rule that published earlier in January.

32
33 It was up for discussion, but the committee was interested in
34 receiving a presentation or giving some more context for some of
35 the management measures that were outlined in that proposed rule.
36 Also, the deadline for comment was going to be before our April
37 meeting, and so the council requested an extension of that comment
38 period, and that was granted, and so the new comment extension is
39 May 29, 2026.

40
41 That allows for this presentation, for everyone to get a little
42 bit of context and to be able to provide some feedback as we begin
43 to develop a comment letter for this proposed rule, and so we do
44 have HMS staff here in-person. Mr. Guy Dubeck is the one that will
45 be giving the presentation. Ms. Karyl Brewster-Geisz is also in
46 the room, and so she'll also be able, if there's any other

1 questions, and so you've got two staff here from HMS to help us
2 out here, and so Guy is going to go through the presentation.

3
4 I'll let you know as well that HMS staff also provided a
5 presentation to the South Atlantic at their March meeting. They
6 have also developed a comment letter, and that's in your briefing
7 book materials.

8
9 The Gulf Council has also drafted a letter that the chair and vice
10 chair have reviewed, and so you all can review that, and certainly,
11 any input that you would like into that letter, staff will go ahead
12 and incorporate before formally submitting for this proposed rule
13 to HMS, and so, at that point, Madam Chair, I would hand it up to
14 our speaker, Mr. Dubeck.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Go ahead.

17
18 **MR. GUY DUBECK:** All right. Well, thank you. Thank you, everyone,
19 and so I'm here to talk about the proposed rule looking at changes
20 for the commercial Atlantic blacknose shark and recreational shark
21 fishing measures.

22
23 Here's kind of just a quick overview of the presentation, and so
24 kind of the purpose and need of this presentation, I mean for this
25 rulemaking, is really to increase management flexibility to kind
26 of react to what's going on with the shark fishery.

27
28 We want to optimize the recreational and commercial ability to
29 harvest the quotas that are available to themselves. We also need
30 to kind of be responsive to some of the actions we put in amendment,
31 in the framework of Amendment 14, some of the findings we had for
32 the Atlantic shark fishery review document, or documents, and some
33 of the public comments from Amendment 16 from during our scoping
34 phase, and also kind of based on recent domestic and international
35 agreements that are having direct and indirect impacts in fisher,
36 and we want to be responsive to making those changes.

37
38 Here's a little background of the commercial fishery measures, and
39 so we assessed blacknose sharks in 2010. They have two different
40 stocks. We have the Atlantic stock that's overfished, with
41 overfishing currently, and then the Gulf stock came back as unknown
42 status.

43
44 Based on the stock assessment results, we did an amendment,
45 Amendment 5A, where we created regional blacknose and non-
46 blacknose small coastal quotas, and, also, we established quota

1 linkages, and that means that, when either the blacknose and/or
2 the non-blacknose small coastal quota was reached, both quotas
3 would be closing down, and so that's where they're kind of linked
4 together.

5
6 So, because of the quota linkages, it was closing down the non-
7 blacknose small coastal quota quite often, because of the blacknose
8 shark quotas were smaller, and so it was impacting a lot of
9 constituents, and so we decided to -- Since blacknose sharks were
10 pretty prevalent north of the thirty-four-degree latitude line, we
11 established a management boundary, and so anything -- Blacknose
12 sharks north of that line, if you caught them, you would just be
13 discarding them, and then remove the quota linkage for those
14 fishermen north of the line, and so it brings North Carolina north.

15
16 However, the quota linkages continued in the South Atlantic area,
17 and fishermen were still targeting blacknose sharks, and catching
18 that quota pretty fast, and closing down the other quota for the
19 South Atlantic fishermen, and so we implemented a small retention
20 limit of eight blacknose sharks for the commercial fishery, to
21 slow down the harvest of blacknose sharks.

22
23 Moving on to the recreational fishery, kind of the background
24 information, and so, in the 1999 FMP, we established a minimum
25 size limit of fifty-four inches for all sharks, or most sharks,
26 and excuse me, and that was based off the size at maturity of
27 sandbar sharks, and then we kind of reduced the number of
28 recreational bag limits to one shark per vessel per trip.

29
30 Then, in 2008, we kind of changed a lot of things in the fishery,
31 with Amendment 2, and some of those things included changing
32 recreational species authorized to be retained. We allowed one
33 sharpnose and one bonnethead per person per trip, and then we also
34 pretty much made it -- You know, to allow one shark up -- You know,
35 that's greater than fifty-four inches per trip.

36
37 Then, in 2013, we, based on the scalloped hammerhead assessment,
38 we changed the size limits for all hammerhead sharks, where you
39 can land them if they're greater than seventy-eight inches, and
40 then, in the smoothhound assessment, we determined that there's no
41 need for recreational retention limits or size limits for that
42 species.

43
44 Moving on to some of the commercial measures in this action, in
45 this, for the -- So we looked at the blacknose shark management
46 boundary line. We're preferring it, in this rulemaking, to remove

1 the boundary line. We're noticing that a lot more -- Because of
2 weather and water temperature changes, a lot more blacknose sharks
3 are migrating further north, and so a lot of the fishermen north
4 of that line were just discarding them. Us removing this boundary
5 line will allow them to be retained under the retention limits,
6 and it feels better for them to retain it than discard it.

7
8 Getting to the retention limit, as I mentioned earlier, you know,
9 currently, we have an eight-blacknose-shark-per-trip limit. Under
10 this rulemaking, we're proposing to create a larger trip limit,
11 and more of a range, and so we're kind of making it very similar
12 to what we do for our large coastal fishery, where we have a range
13 and set a limit at the beginning of the year.

14
15 For the blacknose sharks, we're going to create a range of zero to
16 sixty blacknose sharks, and then start the season at a default
17 limit of twenty-five. We could adjust that during the season, as
18 we do with the large coastal fishery, but we're going to start the
19 fishery at twenty-five at the beginning of the year.

20
21 Moving on to the recreational, some of the background is currently
22 right now -- So, currently, as I mentioned, you know, all shark
23 species are pretty much forty-four inches, and, again, that was
24 based on the size at maturity of sandbar sharks, and a lot of you
25 know that sandbar sharks were prohibited from the recreational
26 fishery since 2008, and so that's kind of what the size at maturity
27 for the size limit is based on.

28
29 As I mentioned, hammerhead sharks, it's greater than seventy-eight
30 inches, and then there's no size limit for the sharpnose, Atlantic
31 sharpnose, bonnethead, or smoothhound.

32
33 I wanted to show this table here, and so these are all the seventeen
34 authorized recreational shark species that any fisherman can
35 retain, and the size at maturity. As you can see, each one is
36 different, and so that kind of complicates things of this a little
37 bit.

38
39 As you see, it's such a range, right? You have the smaller coastal
40 ones, that are a much smaller size at maturity, which are much
41 smaller than fifty-four inches, and then you have some species,
42 like some large coastals, like the tiger and lemon and nurse
43 sharks, where their size at maturity is greater than fifty-four
44 inchesm and so it's not one-size-fits-all for all these species
45 that you see.

1 For this, we analyzed a number of alternatives here. You know,
2 the first one here, besides the status quo, Alternative C2 was
3 establishing a minimum size limit based on the size at maturity
4 for each one of those species, and so, under Alternative C2, we
5 would be implementing seventeen different size limits, based on
6 the size at maturity for those species.

7
8 As you can see, that's very complicated to remember all those, and
9 so, instead, we're preferring to kind of group the species
10 together. We are grouping the species together based on a variety
11 of factors. One is whether they look similar together, their at
12 size maturity is very similar, are they caught in similar trips,
13 or areas, using similar gear types, or also if the regulations
14 currently are the same for those species.

15
16 What we're preferring in this action is C4, which is creating a
17 flexible size limit range, but also grouping some of the shark
18 species together based on this female size at maturity, and I'll
19 show those in a future slide, but, also, I just want to point out
20 none of these alternatives, or this action, whatsoever we looked
21 at, was changing anything with shortfin mako.

22
23 Here's what is under the preferred Alternative C4, what the shark
24 groups would look like, the size at maturity ranges, and then the
25 default limit, meaning default being at the beginning of the year,
26 or fishing season, and it automatically defaults to this limit,
27 and so I'll go through each one of these individually.

28
29 The first group there is the Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead and
30 sharpnose, or, excuse me, sharpnose, bonnethead, and smoothhound,
31 and sorry, and so, again, we group those together mainly because,
32 currently, right now, there is no limit for those species, and so
33 we're keeping that group together because of those factors, but
34 also their similar size maturity for those species, but, in the
35 regulations, we're going to create a flexible range, where you can
36 go up to fifty-four inches or no limits, but, like I mentioned,
37 the default limit for those species at the beginning of every
38 fishing season, unless notified otherwise, is going to be no limit
39 for those species.

40
41 The other one we're grouping together are the blacknose and
42 finetooth. Again, they look similar together, and the female size
43 at maturity is very similar. They would have the same range, up
44 to fifty-four inches, with no limits, but we're going to start the
45 season for those species at a smaller minimum size limit than
46 currently they have of thirty-eight inches.

1
2 Blacktip and spinner, for obvious reasons, we're grouping them
3 together, because, honestly, most people can't tell the difference
4 between them, but we have a larger range for this one. We're going
5 up to seventy inches, because of the spinner shark's female size
6 at maturity, but, at the beginning of the season, they're going to
7 default at forty-eight inches for both those species.

8
9 Hammerhead species, for obvious reasons, we're grouping them
10 together, and then, for this one, we have a larger range of up to
11 110 size limit, but we're just going to default to currently what
12 it is right now, at seventy-eight inches.

13
14 We looped the other large coastals together, the bull, lemon,
15 nurse, and tiger sharks, again having a higher flexible range that
16 could be adjusted, but we're going to default to currently what it
17 is now, at fifty-four inches for the species, and then, similar
18 with the pelagic species, and they have a range up to ninety-four
19 inches, but we're defaulting at fifty-four, and so, at the end of
20 the year they'll stay consistent, and so they wouldn't change.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** All right. Before we move slides though, we do
23 have a question.

24
25 **MR. DUBECK:** Sure. Go ahead.

26
27 **MR. ED WALKER:** Thank you. I'm having a hard time understanding
28 blacktip here. The top of the column says, "minimum size limit",
29 and it says up to seventy inches, and I don't understand how a
30 minimum size limit can be up to seventy inches, particularly since
31 size at maturity is forty-eight, and I'm not following how you're
32 establishing a minimum size limit, or how this range thing works.

33
34 **MR. DUBECK:** All right. Sorry that I didn't clarify, and so,
35 because both species are in there, right, and blacktips have a
36 smaller size at maturity, but the spinners have a higher size at
37 maturity, and so we're going up to seventy-eight inches, right,
38 because that's what the spinner shark went up to for the size at
39 maturity, but we defaulted at kind of meet in the middle, right,
40 to meet in the middle, the midpoint, of the female size at
41 maturity, and we chose forty-eight inches as default to start the
42 season.

43
44 **MR. WALKER:** What do you mean to start the season?

45
46 **MR. DUBECK:** Okay, and so we are -- When the fishing season begins

1 January 1, it's going to default at what the limit is, and so it's
2 defaulting at forty-eight inches. We do not plan to change that
3 in-season.

4
5 The season is going to start January 1 and end December 31 at that
6 size limit, unless there's assessment or something that we change
7 rulemaking-wise in season, during the season, but we're not
8 planning on adjusting the recreational minimum size in-season.
9 You would know before January 1 what it would be. Does that
10 clarify that?

11
12 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** All right. Dr. Froeschke.

13
14 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Yes, and, just sort of on that same line, I
15 guess, in that first row, Atlantic sharpnose and bonnethead, I
16 think the world record is about forty-one inches, and so it just
17 seems like those numbers don't -- Wouldn't it be better just to
18 close the season?

19
20 **MR. DUBECK:** I mean, so, based on the information we would get,
21 and so, if science, or a new assessment, has come out saying that
22 we need to cut down on recreational mortality, whether it's bag
23 limit or size limit, then we would make those changes, but it
24 allows that flexibility for us to do that.

25
26 Otherwise, we would have to wait to do another rulemaking, a couple
27 of years down the line, to make those adjustments, but we wouldn't
28 be adjusting those things without some sort of reason for doing
29 that, whether it's the catch limits, or the ACLs are being
30 exceeded, things like that, but they're not being right now. As
31 you know, most of the recreational fishery is a catch and release
32 right now.

33
34 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and, just to follow up, I guess the fifty-
35 four inches just doesn't even make any sense. They don't come
36 within a foot of that size, and so why --

37
38 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes, and, I mean, it's just us having that flexibility
39 to then close it down if we need to. I don't see that happening
40 for some of those stocks. It's just that it creates the
41 flexibility for us to do those things if needed, based on
42 scientific information or catch data.

43
44 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, maybe you could, on that table that you have
45 the size at maturity, you could put the maximum length of the
46 individual species there, and then it might make more sense to the

1 public.

2
3 **MR. DUBECK:** Thank you.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Any more questions? Ms. Ballard.

6
7 **MS. BRENDA BALLARD:** Okay, because, yes, this is a little
8 confusing, and are you saying that you're going to start -- Let's
9 use blacknose, and we keep picking different ones, but let's use
10 blacknose. It's going to be thirty-eight.

11
12 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes.

13
14 **MS. BALLARD:** But, if you decide there's an issue, you can change
15 it up to fifty-four, but you'll never go over fifty-four.

16
17 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes. However, we wouldn't be doing that without prior
18 notification of those things.

19
20 **MS. BALLARD:** But those limits would be set already?

21
22 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes.

23
24 **MS. BALLARD:** Okay.

25
26 **MR. DUBECK:** Because, I mean, right now, blacknose, it is fifty-
27 four inches. I know some states have it different, but, currently,
28 right now in federal waters, blacknose has to be greater than
29 fifty-four inches than land those recreationally, which you rarely
30 see that, if at all.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Okay. Any other questions before we move forward?
33 You're good to go.

34
35 **MR. DUBECK:** Okay. All right. Let's see. Let's go to the next
36 slide. Right now, here's kind of what the recreational backgrounds
37 are, where you can keep one of the following shark species here
38 per trip. You can have one sharpnose, and then one bonnethead per
39 person, and then unlimited smoothhound, and so, currently, right
40 now, you can keep -- Per trip, you can keep like one blacktip,
41 and, for example, let's say you have three people on board. You
42 can keep one blacktip, and you can keep up to three sharpnose and
43 bonnethead per person, and then unlimited smoothhound right now,
44 and so that's currently like what we have going on.

45
46 Under the retention limits, we analyzed three alternatives. We're

1 preferring to establish flexible retention limits, which I'll go
2 over in the next slide, where we can adjust those as needed, and
3 so, similar, we're kind of creating groups here for the
4 recreational fishery, and then having adjustments to size limits,
5 and then having defaults the beginning of the fishing season.

6
7 I'll start at the top there. That large group there means that
8 you can, from that group -- You know, blacknose, bull, spinner,
9 all those species, we're going to create a range of zero to three,
10 or unlimited, but we're going to default to this fishing season at
11 one, and so all those species, you can retain one, one shark per
12 vessel per trip.

13
14 For sharpnose and bonnethead, this is the change we put in this
15 rulemaking, was to make it consistent with the other shark species,
16 is you can keep -- We have a range for those, from zero to four
17 unlimited, and then the default is one shark per vessel per trip,
18 and so it is a change in this rulemaking from a per person to one
19 shark per vessel per trip.

20
21 Blacktips, we pulled those out separately, especially since we've
22 had assessments on that species, and so we're creating a range of
23 zero to five, or no limits, and you can keep one shark per vessel
24 per trip, and then, smoothhound, we created that range again, where
25 we're defaulting to no limit for that shark species.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Before you jump slides, we do have a question.

28
29 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes, and I was waiting for that one.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Captain Walker.

32
33 **MR. WALKER:** So it seems like we're doing it again here. You're
34 saying you're cutting it to one. This whole range thing to me is
35 -- It seems like it's just misleading, and makes it seem like
36 you're not doing something that you are doing. The season opens
37 at one per vessel under this proposal.

38
39 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes.

40
41 **MR. WALKER:** I don't understand any purpose at all for you putting
42 up to five, or up to four, or anything like this. I mean,
43 realistically, I don't see some stock assessment coming out for
44 any of these that's going to allow you to quadruple the vessel
45 limit at any time coming up, and am I missing something?

1 **MR. DUBECK:** Well, I mean, I mentioned we had the blacktip
2 assessments, right? In the Atlantic, the stock is healthy, and so
3 we could increase it higher than one for that stock, but it depends
4 on what the ACL and catch limits would be for those, but, again,
5 we would do that not in season-wise. It would be prior, letting
6 people know that in advance.

7
8 **MR. WALKER:** So I think one of the things this council kicked
9 around to ask you guys was to provide some rationale, or
10 justification, for implementing vessel limits at all. It hasn't
11 been assessed in sixteen years, and most reports say these species
12 are abundant, and, with a lot of the reef fish closures, fishermen
13 are happy to have an alternative, an abundant, sustainable species
14 they can take home and eat. Personally, I don't see any
15 justification from HMS on why you should change from a per person
16 to a vessel limit. Essentially, you're cutting people's limits on
17 an abundant species, correct?

18
19 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes, and so we're trying to make everything consistent
20 across-the-board, right? One thing we've heard from a majority of
21 fishermen is the complication of HMS regulations, especially
22 recreationally, and trying to remember different size limits and
23 bag limits, or is this per person, or per shark limits, and so
24 we're trying to make it, in this alternative, referring to make
25 everything consistent, so you know they can keep that number of
26 sharks per trip, and not, realizing, okay, how many people do I
27 have, and then can I keep that shark multiple limits or not,
28 because there's also confusion of identification of sharks, right,
29 because most unseasoned people can't tell the difference between
30 the shark species, and they end up limiting like six blacktips and
31 they're like, oh, I thought it was something else.

32
33 **MR. WALKER:** What I'm hearing here is you have no legitimate
34 rationale to make this change.

35
36 **MR. DUBECK:** It's more just kind of making it consistent across-
37 the-board for simplicity of regulations.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Okay. Dakus, and then I have a question.

40
41 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thanks for the presentation. I'm trying to -
42 - In Texas, we've got an extensive coast, and a significant shore-
43 based shark fishery, and how does this apply? Is that still a
44 shore-based event, and still considered -- Shark fishing large
45 tournaments, are they still -- Is that considered a trip?

1 **MR. DUBECK:** So this is for federal waters, and so some of the
2 states have different regulations, like I mentioned, right now,
3 and so the Gulf already has a limit of up to five blacktips per
4 trip, but we've always had one. This is kind of -- This regulation
5 here kind of mirrors what they have right now, and so it's just
6 federal waters.

7
8 **MR. GEESLIN:** Typically, we have -- Every time we move a shark to
9 the prohibited list, we immediately -- Well, with the next change
10 in statewide fishing proclamations, we mirror most of the federal
11 regs, especially for sharks, and so I'm just trying to -- Okay,
12 and so that gives me a little more flexibility and freedom to do
13 what's best for shore-based anglers in Texas. Thank you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Dr. Sweetman.

16
17 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** To that point, I sit in a little bit of a
18 different seat, because I'm covering the other coast of Florida
19 too and ASMFC does have regulatory authority for state waters, and
20 will typically adopt, through their interstate fishery management
21 plan, what HMS does, and so it will impact state waters, even
22 though it's just for the federal waters component here, and so
23 Florida has the same deal.

24
25 We've got an entire permit that's relative to that, and so this
26 would have massive impacts on that, and then, on top of that,
27 relative to that, if you do ultimately change things along these
28 lines here, and ASMFC does rubber stamp that, all the states are
29 going to have to go through some sort of regulatory update in order
30 to comply with this, or go through some sort of conservation
31 equivalency, and I get what you're saying, trying to make this a
32 little bit more streamlined in understanding, but when --

33
34 I'm not really in favor of putting in added restrictions that would
35 limit harvest, where there's no evidence of an issue there, just
36 to make things simple. Like Atlantic sharpnose, in my opinion, is
37 one of the most abundant sharks that's out there, and a one per
38 vessel is just -- I think it's going to be really hard for the
39 public, and us as managers, to really understand why that would
40 even be considered in a rulemaking package like this, but I'll
41 hold it there.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Okay, and I have a question for you.

44
45 **MR. DUBECK:** Sure.

1 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Under the minimum size limits, you guys put
2 together blacktip and spinner, but, if I'm reading this right on
3 this table, you've now split spinner from blacktip, and on the
4 minimum size, and it was because of species identification, but
5 here it's not. I understand it's defaulting to one, but, if you
6 were to change it, you've now got them with a different regulation
7 again, and so can you give me some rationale for that?

8
9 **MR. DUBECK:** Again, like I mentioned, we've had an assessment for
10 blacktip sharks, and so we can, based on -- I'm going to use the
11 Atlantic as an example again. A healthy stock population, where
12 we can go up to three, or four. However, we haven't assessed
13 spinner sharks, and so we don't know what that conservation change
14 would do to that stock, and so we would be more cautious, or
15 conservative, with that approach if they're grouped together.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Right, but, if they're being misidentified anyway,
18 and as someone that's published a paper on the identification of
19 spinner sharks, they are commonly misidentified as blacktips, and
20 so I don't know that -- I think you're going to have more harvested
21 than you intend, and so I don't know that I would split those here
22 either, just because misidentification has rationale for the size
23 limits as well.

24
25 **MR. DUBECK:** Thanks.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Any other questions? Ed.

28
29 **MR. WALKER:** So I guess the blacktip assessment was positive,
30 healthy?

31
32 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes.

33
34 **MR. WALKER:** So this proposal cuts the vessel limit after a
35 positive assessment came out.

36
37 **MR. DUBECK:** Well, I mean, it's just stating the status quo to
38 what it is. We're just now, instead of having it group together,
39 if you pull that --

40
41 **MR. WALKER:** No, I'm talking -- Right now, if you have six people
42 on a vessel, right, can you take six blacktips?

43
44 **MR. DUBECK:** Right now, you can only have one per vessel. However,
45 this is just the status quo, putting one, and we can go up to five,
46 or, as we have here, unlimited, and so, once we establish those

1 things, there could be no limits to that stock.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Right now, where it is cutting, Ed, if I
4 understand this correct, would be Atlantic sharpnose, and
5 bonnethead, which are currently one per person under the current
6 regulations.

7
8 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and thanks for that clarification.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Okay. We're going to move forward.

11
12 **MR. DUBECK:** Okay. All right, and so we've got a couple more
13 slides. A couple of things I want to mention in this rulemaking,
14 I want to -- It's kind of miscellaneous things we put in here to
15 change. As I mentioned earlier about the quota linkages, in this
16 rulemaking, we're removing them. We said we were going to do that
17 a few years ago in Amendment 14, and that was finalized, and so
18 now we're just going to remove quota linkages, and so, once that
19 quota is reached, that quota and that fishery, that species itself,
20 will be closed, and you can continue fishing for the other species.

21
22 Some other miscellaneous things, and we're clarifying some of the
23 reference when we talk about thresher shark. Sometimes we just
24 say thresher shark regulations, and we're going to clarify what
25 we're talking about, common or bigeye. Also, we're going to update
26 what we call our pelagic shark management group. Right now, it's
27 pelagic shark other than blue and porbeagle, but, honestly, it's
28 just common thresher, and then it's mako sharks when they're
29 available, when they're authorized, and so that's what we're
30 changing this complex name to, and then we're removing some
31 references to oceanic whitetip in the commercial fishery
32 regulations.

33
34 Here's kind of what the rulemaking time was. You know, we had it
35 out. As mentioned, we extended the comment period. Comments are
36 due by the end of May. We are going to be talking about this
37 rulemaking again in our AP meeting in a couple of weeks, in May
38 too, and so I included this here.

39
40 We've chatted about a bunch of these already, but these are kind
41 of some of the comments we've gotten so far, to kind of give you
42 a heads-up of what we've heard, and we're hearing the same comments
43 here, but, for the blacknose sharks, overall support for us to
44 make those changes to ensure the quota is harvested and reduce
45 those discards.

1 The recreational fishery, general support for making some
2 flexibility and setting the size limits based on the size at
3 maturity, but also concern giving us the authority to change those
4 adjustments, minimum size limits or bag limits, without prior
5 notification, or the frequency of doing those, and concern that
6 states may not be able to make those changes, those parallel
7 changes, and, like I mentioned, it's not something we would do in-
8 season. It would be something at the beginning of the season that
9 we would give people notice about, but the reason for those
10 changes, too.

11
12 Then we've gotten some questions regarding the proposed shark
13 groups, the differences between those, the scientific basis for
14 the proposed changes, and then also how the proposed changes would
15 work with the flexible size limits, the bag limits and things like
16 that, and then we've gotten a lot of comments and suggestions to
17 keep the retention limit for sharpnose at per person when they set
18 the vessel limit, and that's all I had. It's kind of just I'm
19 here to take more questions, comments, and everything.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** I imagine we have more questions.

22
23 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Captain Walker.

26
27 **MR. WALKER:** So I'm looking at the purpose and need, and the
28 purpose says to optimize the ability of commercial and rec shark
29 fisheries to harvest available quota, to the extent practicable,
30 but I don't really see how this implementing a vessel limit of one
31 meets that stated purpose, because you're not actually optimizing
32 anybody's ability to harvest anything when you cut their limit
33 down.

34
35 **MR. DUBECK:** To be honest, most fishermen are not retaining those
36 species. It's a catch-and-release fishery right now. The majority
37 of the species that are caught, I mean, are maybe one shark per
38 trip. You're not seeing the large numbers.

39
40 **MR. WALKER:** Well, that's voluntary. That's not mandatory. You're
41 making it mandatory, which goes against your purpose, which is to
42 optimize people's ability to harvest here.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** I would also argue that's not correct in Texas.
45 We have headboats that go out and do target, in federal waters,
46 Atlantic sharpnose and bonnetheads, and they do land a boat limit.

1 I'm not necessarily opposed to a vessel limit. I'm not sure I
2 support a vessel limit of one. Any other questions? Mr. Anson.

3
4 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** I'm not on your committee, and thank you for
5 recognizing me, and thank you for the presentation. I'm just
6 curious about the recreational data that's used in your
7 assessments. That's from the MRIP data series?

8
9 **MR. DUBECK:** It depends on the species, but we use MRIP, LPS, the
10 Texas headboats, the Southeast Headboat, the Louisiana Creel
11 survey, and they're used all in those kinds of -- It depends on
12 the species and the data that they have.

13
14 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so they are going through the process now of
15 the pilot study for the FES survey, and the question
16 reorganization, and so that's going to have some impacts on the
17 estimates of effort, and going to cause some changes in the
18 estimates of catch, and so can you tell me, kind of shortly, if
19 you know the answer, what the process is internally for you all
20 relative to assessments and the schedule of assessments for sharks
21 using the new data, the data streams?

22
23 **MR. DUBECK:** Yes, and so, right now, we're, for the assessment
24 schedule, currently doing the -- We're underway on the sandbar
25 assessments, and, after that, we have bull shark, and then we
26 haven't figured out what we're going to do next after that. I
27 don't know about the estimates, if they'll be ready for the sandbar
28 assessment, because I'm unsure when they're coming out, but, when
29 they do come out, and if we are assessing the species, we can make
30 those changes, that kind of thing.

31
32 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and a follow-up. I guess I didn't ask it clearly
33 enough, but relative to -- That sounds like a normal assessment
34 schedule, and so you're -- I'm going to say this, but I might get
35 some frowns, but it's a relatively easy lift to just go ahead and
36 change, you know, the data stream, one data stream, in an
37 assessment, and rerun the numbers relative to starting from
38 scratch, if you will, and so I'm just wondering, for those
39 assessments that may have been recently done, where it's relatively
40 easy to just go back and change that data stream and update the
41 revised MRIP data with the pilot study estimates in there,
42 incorporated in there, and do you have intentions of doing that to
43 check on the status of stocks?

44
45 **MR. DUBECK:** I'm going to default to the Science Center on this
46 one. I wouldn't say easy, and I wouldn't want to speak for them,

1 or the workload that it would entail to do those things, and so I
2 would just defer to them on that.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Any other questions? Dr. Walter.

5
6 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Kevin, you would have to bring MRIP-FES into
7 sharks. Thank you. Sharks have some challenges with many of the
8 assessments already, and a lot of it goes back to the historical
9 landings that really weren't partitioned well for the species
10 composition, because we didn't have that ability in the fishery,
11 and so we're taking a kind of hard look at all of the assessments,
12 and, at least some of them, we're recommending that they're not
13 going to be useful for management advice, particularly some of the
14 historical ones.

15
16 This is something that's going to be coming out in particular
17 because of those historical landings time series that then drive
18 the assumptions of benchmarks for rebuilding and other things, and
19 so there's some challenges we're facing with sharks that we have
20 yet to really fully bring forward, but that's one of the delays
21 that we're facing when we take a hard look at the shark
22 assessments, that the challenges go back well in time to those
23 1980s time periods, when the species just weren't broken up, and
24 so that wholly defines what your benchmarks are going to be,
25 whether your ratio of say sandbar to dusky is 70-30 or 90-10.

26
27 Now, recent catch time series from the recreational fishery, while
28 it's a bit of a challenge, you'll see, in the presentation from
29 Trevor about the SSC, about the MRIP-FES MSE, and I'll highlight
30 that what that does is it evaluated whether we can give useful
31 management advice, even if we don't know the absolute values of
32 the recreational catch, and the answer was largely, and I'm going
33 to steal the thunder, that it does work as long as that bias is
34 constant over time.

35
36 We can still get stock status, and, as long as you set your ACLs
37 in the unit that you measure it in, then you can still manage for
38 overfishing, and so it doesn't mean that we have to immediately go
39 redo the assessments because we have these new MRIP numbers,
40 because that's, unfortunately, just not going to be in the cards,
41 particularly for sharks, because we're down several analysts in
42 that shark group.

43
44 Now, just getting to where we're going in the future, and I'll
45 give a little bit of a preface of that, one of the goals is, as we
46 streamline how we give management advice, which is something that

1 we're definitely considering with all of the council-managed
2 species, and trying to minimize the terminal inertia, as I call
3 it, that oftentimes the management advice is years old before it
4 hits the water, is to try to find the most parsimonious tool to
5 get the job of providing annual catch limits done and utilize that
6 tool so that we can get advice that's current with what's going on
7 in the water.

8
9 For sharks, a lot of that process is going to happen, and be
10 started, through the sandbar assessment, where we're going to try
11 to develop an empirical management procedure, which is an index-
12 based management procedure.

13
14 While it will look like a stock assessment as it starts, the goal
15 will be to try to develop a management procedure that then can use
16 our indices to then adjust the catch limits moving forward in the
17 future without being wholly reliant on the assumptions about what
18 the historical catches were, so that we essentially are able to
19 use our indices, because that's really what's telling us what's
20 going on now, and not that we really don't know what went on in
21 1980.

22
23 That's sort of the nutshell of the approach there. We hope that,
24 if that approach works for sandbar, which is one of our most data-
25 rich species, and we use all that data to parameterize what we're
26 calling the operating models, which are the suite of models that
27 we test that MP on, then that will set us sort of a standard for
28 what we might be able to do for the other shark species, so that
29 we can give management advice more frequently, we can update some
30 of the historical assessments, and then so we can actually get Guy
31 some of this information, so that they can update things more
32 rapidly, and we can get the fisheries presumably started again, if
33 the stocks can handle that, and that's sort of the goal moving
34 forward for sharks. Thanks.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Any other
37 questions before we move to the next agenda item? Not seeing any,
38 Dr. Hollensead.

39
40 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just before we do leave
41 this item, I think I did hear, from the letter, there was a couple
42 of things that I noted that aren't currently in the draft letter
43 that it sounds like can be added.

44
45 One of the things is, you know, oftentimes we've brought up state
46 management reflects federal management for things, and I hadn't

1 put that in the letter just yet, and so I'll make sure that that's
2 commented in there as well to capture that.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Thank you very much for your presentation.

5
6 **UPDATE ON MODIFYING HMS CHARTER-FOR-HIRE ELECTRONIC REPORTING**

7
8 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Onto the next agenda item,
9 and so here -- Just a little bit of history here. On September
10 5th of 2024, HMS issued a proposed rule considering electronic
11 reporting requirements for all sectors, and so this was a very
12 broad rule that encompasses commercial, the charter-for-hire, and
13 the private sector for several HMS-managed species.

14
15 Back at that time, HMS had actually come in-person at the November
16 2024 Gulf Council meeting and provided a presentation, and so
17 that's available. That presentation is available as background
18 material in your meeting materials. As a result, the council went
19 on ahead and submitted a formal comment letter on that following
20 December to that rule, and that's also available in the briefing
21 book.

22
23 Largely, some of the concerns was, you know, as we were at the
24 time developing the SEFHIER 2.0 program, there were some
25 stipulations within what HMS was thinking about doing specifically
26 for the charter-for-hire, in terms of the regulatory reporting.

27
28 You know, they had also mentioned that, for example, if you go out
29 and collect bait for your fishing trip, that would need to be
30 reported, which is something this council had sort of not wanted
31 to do for their SEFHIER program, and so how would these regulations
32 sort of interact for those program participants who have a charter-
33 for-hire for HMS and they're also dually-permitted for reef fish,
34 for example, and so there were some questions on when that would
35 go through.

36
37 If possible, you know, the committee has requested that HMS staff
38 provide just a little bit of an update on the timing of this
39 proposed rule, you know, any updates that they might be able to
40 provide at this time, since it has been a little bit since the
41 committee heard a formal presentation, and so that was back in
42 fall of 2024.

43
44 This would just be a verbal update, and just sort of informational,
45 and so I don't know if Mr. Dubeck or Ms. Brewster-Geisz has any
46 just verbal updates on the, you know, sort of timing or anything

1 that might be useful to the committee as they, again, consider
2 what is required of charter-for-hire sector in terms of electronic
3 reporting.

4
5 **MS. KARYL BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Thank you for the question. We saw the
6 item on the agenda, but we weren't quite certain what you wanted
7 to know, and so, if I understand correctly, you are asking what
8 the timing is for our final rule, and so we are busy working on
9 the final rule, working through all the issues.

10
11 We have watched sort of the council, and what you guys are doing,
12 and what the other councils are all doing, and fingers crossed,
13 best of luck, we would have a final rule out before the end of
14 this year, but timing of regulations are not as easy to predict at
15 this current time as they have been in the past, and so that's
16 pretty much all I can share at the moment.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Thank you. So, Dr. Hollensead, I guess, based on
19 my recollection of the action guide, and I know I'm jumping forward
20 a little bit, Dr. Simmons, but that means we would be taking final
21 action on SEFHIER prior to HMS's electronic reporting rule coming
22 out?

23
24 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I think, tentatively, we would be bringing a
25 public hearing of SEFHIER 2.0 for you in June. It would then go
26 out for comment and everything, and then we would go final in
27 August. Ms. Brewster-Geisz has indicated that potentially they
28 could go final sometime before the end of the calendar year, of
29 2026, and that could come in around the same time, potentially.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Just getting our timeline and theirs in my head.
32 Any questions regarding HMS electronic reporting? Dr. Sweetman.

33
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Ms. Chair, and thanks for being here,
35 Karyl, and I know you're going through final rule. I think the -
36 - How can I phrase this in a way -- Okay. The big concern, one of
37 the big concerns, that we had when you guys were going through
38 proposed rule was the validation component and ensuring that this
39 isn't going to be duplicative with some of the efforts that we
40 have here.

41
42 I think, at that meeting, you kind of tried to ensure us that that
43 was not the case, and it's not going to be duplicative reporting,
44 or anything along those lines, and so that's good.

45
46 The validation component, considering -- I guess I'm wondering,

1 and did you guys address validation in the final rule framework
2 here that you're moving towards, so it can be usable, because it's
3 all species that you're asking to report from, and so I'm trying
4 to ensure that the councils are getting the information that we
5 need from that system. Am I making sense to you there?
6

7 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Yes, and our whole -- Part of what is taking
8 so long is our whole purpose is one-stop reporting, and so, if
9 somebody reports your species to us, you get that information.
10 If, in your system, they report our species to you, we get that
11 information, and so we're working to make sure there's no duplicate
12 reporting, that people who are reporting only have to report once,
13 and they're covered across-the-board, whether it's your council,
14 the South Atlantic, up in GARFO, all of our stuff. That is part
15 of what's taking so long with this, is making sure all those parts
16 work together and that we are not duplicating what you're doing,
17 and you're not duplicating what we're doing.
18

19 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Then just -- So that kind of leads into that
20 validation component there too, right, and so, if people are
21 reporting to you, to HMS, fish that we're managing, and there's no
22 validation with the data they're reporting to you, I'm not sure
23 that we're going to be able to use that information. I guess
24 that's kind of why I'm asking if that part had been addressed
25 within the final rule, and I realize there's probably things you
26 can't say until that rule is actually done, and so --
27

28 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Thanks for your patience on all that.
29

30 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very
31 much for answering all of our questions.
32

33 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Thank you.
34

35 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** One more. Captain Frady.
36

37 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, Madam Chair. I've
38 got a question here. I mean, the proposed rule for HMS is
39 considering electronic reporting requirements for all sectors,
40 commercial, charter-for-hire, and private.
41

42 Currently, we're working under a SEFHIER program, trying to develop
43 our own charter-for-hire reporting system, and I'm kind of curious,
44 and has NOAA Fisheries or HMS set aside a budget for your proposed
45 electronic reporting requirements?
46

1 Is that something, a line item, that you all got to deal with at
2 the budget, because we're told we don't have money for a SEFHIER
3 program, but here you're getting ready to implement electronic
4 reporting, potentially, and I want to know where the money is going
5 to come from to run that, but we don't have money to run a different
6 program, and I didn't know if you knew that or not, but I just saw
7 that, and I'm like it's kind of conflicting as to what we've been
8 working on.

9
10 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Yes, and I have to admit that I haven't been
11 watching the budget that we have for that. That is -- I tend to
12 focus more on the regulatory end of things, and so, if we haven't
13 been told no on certain things, then I keep going.

14
15 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, ma'am. I appreciate your answer. I just
16 didn't know if this was an appropriate time to ask, or if you were
17 even in the know. Thank you.

18
19 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Yes, and now I have one more thing to go back
20 and ask those above me.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** All right. Any more questions or comments? No?
23 Okay. You're not getting off the hook that easy. Dr. Sweetman.

24
25 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and I just want to put it out there again, and
26 I'm not even sure this is a question, but I was just reminding
27 myself, as I was remembering the past discussion, but economic
28 data was one of the things that this council has really struggled
29 with, and that's gotten --

30
31 Some of those have been intense discussions, and I'll put it that
32 way there, and so just making sure that trying to align those the
33 best that we possibly can, because there are some things that
34 really anger some of our fishermen, you know, getting into the
35 weeds on something, and so we're really trying to get the minimum
36 amount of information that would be usable for like fishery
37 disasters, or trying to understand things along those lines, and
38 so just throwing that out there as you're going through final
39 rulemaking.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Okay.

42
43 **MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ:** Thank you.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Okay. One more round. Anybody else got any
46 questions? All right. Thank you very much. We'll let you off

1 the hook. All right. We had no other business added to the agenda
2 at the beginning, and so, with that, I believe that concludes HMS.

3
4 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

5
6 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Okay. We're going to get started. Before we get
7 into Data Collection with Mr. Walker, we'll go back to Dr. Banks,
8 and there was some discussion about the migratory letter. Dr.
9 Banks.

10
11 **DISCUSSION OF LETTER**
12

13 **CHAIRMAN BANKS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're going to make a quick
14 announcement, and so, for the letter that was in your briefing
15 book, in the background, that is a draft. It has not currently
16 been sent to HMS. We have heard that there are significant edits,
17 or there are some additional language that some members would like
18 added, and so, if you will read through that draft and, if you
19 have significant edits, have that ready for Full Council.

20
21 When we read this report in, we will go through the letter at that
22 point, to add any edits to it. We cannot do this via email, just
23 for reminder, because that is not transparent, and we need to have
24 it in the record at this table in the discussions, and so, again,
25 this draft is in your briefing book, in the background materials.
26 Please read through and make sure you are okay with the language.
27 If not, be ready to discuss in Full Council.

28
29 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 7, 2026.)
30

31 - - -
32