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NOAA Fisheries Requests Applications From Commercial Fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico Fishing Region for Participation in the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species 2015 Shark Research Fishery

Posted January 21, 2015

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) requests commercial shark fishermen who would like to participate in the 2015 shark research fishery and are fishing or plan to fish in the Gulf of Mexico fishing region to submit both a completed shark research fishery application and the required vessel information to the HMS Management Division by February 5, 2015.

Shark research fishery permits authorize participation in the shark research fishery and the collection of sandbar, other large coastal sharks (LCS), small coastal shark (SCS), and pelagic sharks from federal waters in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea, for the purposes of scientific data collection, subject to 100 percent observer coverage. On October 31, 2014, NMFS published a notice requesting applications for participation in the 2015 shark research fishery from commercial shark fishermen. From that notice, NMFS has selected six qualified applicants to participate in the 2015 shark research fishery among four fishing regions: North Carolina, east coast of Florida, the Florida Keys, and South Atlantic. However, none of the qualified applicants were located in the Gulf of Mexico fishing region. Given the need to collect information that will both aid future stock assessments and management measures in the Gulf of Mexico fishing region, NMFS is providing a second notice requesting applications from commercial shark fishermen who fish or plan to fish in the Gulf of Mexico region for participation in the 2015 shark research fishery.

NMFS will select a limited number of qualified applicants to participate in the 2015 shark research fishery in the Gulf of Mexico region based on the temporal and spatial needs of the research objectives, the available quota, the availability of observers, and the availability of the qualified applicants. These selected applicants will be issued shark research fishery permits and will be subject to 100 percent observer coverage on all shark research fishery trips. The shark research vessels may fish without an observer when not on a shark research fishery trip. A shark research fishery permit will only be valid only for the calendar year 2015 and only for the specific vessel and owner(s) listed on the permit, subject to the terms and conditions listed on the permit. The shark research fishery permit(s) issued to the fisherman fishing in the Gulf of Mexico region will have the same permit conditions as those issued in the other fishing regions. Those conditions will be discussed in a mandatory permit holders meeting to be held in early January 2015 and announced in another notice.

Potential applicants from the Gulf of Mexico fishing region are encouraged to call in and listen to the discussion. Once the selected participant(s) from the Gulf of Mexico region has been issued a 2015 shark research fisher permit, NMFS will contact the permit holder(s) to discuss the research objectives and protocols of the 2015 shark research fishery to minimize any delays in collecting information in the Gulf of Mexico fishing region.

NMFS will review the submitted applications based on the selection criteria as described in the Federal Register notice and information provided on the application form to determine which applicants are qualified to participate in the shark research fishery.

Qualified applicants are those that:

- possess a valid directed or incidental* commercial shark permit;
- possess a valid United States Coast Guard (USCG) safety inspection decal when the application is submitted;
- have not been charged criminally or civilly (e.g., issued a Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) or Notice of Permit Sanction) for any HMS-related violation;
- have complied with NMFS observer programs and are able to take a NMFS-approved observer **; and,
- submit a completed application by 5 p.m., local time on February 5, 2015.

Only vessels that meet all of the above qualifications and will be fishing in the Gulf of Mexico region will be considered for the shark research fishery during this second round of consideration. * While incidental permit holders may apply, please note that for 2015, priority will be given to qualified directed permit holders to meet the research objectives. **Priority will also be given to vessels with past participation in the NMFS observer program.

Completed Shark Research Fishery Permit Applications that include all information required must be received no later than 5 p.m., local time on February 5, 2015, in order to be considered. For copies of the application,

please write to the HMS Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or call (301) 427-8503 (phone), or (301) 713-1917 (fax). Copies of the application are also available at the HMS Management Division's website at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/index.htm>. Please submit completed applications to the HMS Management Division at the address listed above or by fax. Final decisions on the issuance of a shark research fishery permit will depend on the submission of all required information, and review of applicant information as outlined in the Federal Register notice. Additionally, please be advised your application may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

This notice is a courtesy to individuals interested in HMS fisheries activities to keep you informed about the fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz, Delisse Ortiz, or Guý DuBeck at (301) 427-8503.

About Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans, which are designed to manage fishery resources within the 200-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.



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