

# Scoping Meeting Schedule for Three Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Actions

NOAA Fisheries announces a schedule for scoping meetings and webinars for three actions evaluating possible revisions to measures implemented under the [2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species \(HMS\) Fisheries Management Plan](#).

The public process for these actions begins with scoping to determine the range of issues for each action. Notices announcing our intent to prepare an environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act and the availability of an issues and options paper for each action were announced separately.

## Amendment 13

[This amendment](#) considers refining the Individual Bluefin Tuna Quota (IBQ) Program, reassessing allocation of bluefin tuna quotas, including the discontinuing or phasing out of the Purse Seine category, and other regulatory provisions regarding bluefin tuna directed fisheries and incidental pelagic longline fisheries. Potential changes to the IBQ program are based on the recently released [Draft Three-Year Review of the IBQ Program](#).

For additional information, contact Tom Warren or Sarah McLaughlin at 978-281-9260.

## Amendment 14

[This amendment](#) explores options to implement the newly revised [National Standard 1](#) guidelines in the context of shark annual catch limits, including how to account for uncertainty stemming from either stock assessments or the management process.

For additional information, contact Guý DuBeck or Ian Miller at 301-427-8503.

## Spatial Management Research

[This action](#) considers ways to perform research and collect data in closed areas to assess the effectiveness of spatial HMS management.

For additional information, contact Steve Durkee at 202-670-6637 or Tobey Curtis at 978-281-9260.

# Schedule

## Scoping Meetings

| Action   | Date          | Time     | Location and Street Address  |
|--|---------------|----------|--|
| Amendment 13                                   | June 3, 2019  | 5–8 p.m. | Gulf of Maine Research Institute<br>350 Commercial Street<br>Portland, ME 04101  |
| Amendment 13<br>Spatial Management<br>Research | June 4, 2019  | 5–8 p.m. | National Marine Fisheries Service<br>Greater Atlantic Regional Office<br>55 Great Republic Drive<br>Gloucester, MA 01930 |
| Amendment 13*                                  | June 11, 2019 | 5–8 p.m. | Ocean County Library, Toms River<br>Branch<br>101 Washington Street<br>Toms River, NJ 08753                              |
| Amendment 13                                   | June 18, 2019 | 5–8 p.m. | Chatham Community Center<br>702 Main Street<br>Chatham, MA 02633   |
| Amendment 13                                   | June 19, 2018 | 5–8 p.m. | Plymouth Public Library<br>132 South Street<br>Plymouth, MA 02360  |
| Amendment 14                                   | June 24, 2019 | 5–8 p.m. | National Marine Fisheries Service<br>Southeast Regional Office<br>263 13th Avenue South<br>Saint Petersburg, FL 33701    |
| All  | June 25, 2019 | 5–8 p.m. | Susan Broom Kilmer Branch Library<br>101 Melody Lane<br>Fort Pierce, FL 34950  |
| Amendment 13                                   | July 9, 2019  | 5–8 p.m. | NC Division of Marine Fisheries<br>5285 Highway 70<br>Morehead City, NC 28557  |
| All  | July 10, 2019 | 5–8 p.m. | Dare County Administration Building<br>954 Marshall Collins Drive<br>Commissioners Meeting Room<br>Manteo, NC 27954      |
| All  | July 25, 2019 | 5–8 p.m. | Terrebonne Parish Library (Main<br>Branch)<br>151 Library Drive<br>Houma, LA 70360                                       |

*\*The June 11, 2019 meeting in Toms River, NJ may begin after a 5 p.m. public hearing for the proposed rule regarding the pelagic longline bluefin tuna area-based and weak hook management measures. For further information, please see a coming announcement for the proposed rule public hearings.*

## Webinars

### *Amendment 13*

- June 10, 2019
- 2–4 p.m.
- <https://noaanmfs-events1.webex.com/noaanmfs-events1/onstage/g.php?MTID=e25072f282e22bc58188f278a9328285e>

Dial In: 800-369-1177

Passcode: 2046577

### *Amendment 14*

- May 28, 2019
- 1–3 p.m.
- Link: <https://noaanmfs-events1.webex.com/noaanmfs-events1/onstage/g.php?MTID=ed71080c2cb6d03424331aaa808865f0f>

Dial In: 888-282-0428

Passcode: 4913538

### *Spatial Management Research*

- June 19, 2019
- 2–4 p.m.
- Link: <https://noaanmfs-events1.webex.com/noaanmfs-events1/onstage/g.php?MTID=e90547c85b1c1d30c8adedba286178d7d>

Dial In: 888-324-8014

Passcode: 5920937

# Now Available: Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Pelagic Longline Bluefin Tuna Area-Based and Weak Hook Management Measures

Through the rulemaking process, NOAA Fisheries is considering whether current area-based and gear management measures remain necessary to reduce and maintain low numbers of bluefin tuna discards and interactions in the pelagic longline fishery for Atlantic highly migratory species given more recent management measures in the fishery. A [Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#) (DEIS) has been prepared to evaluate a range of potential management alternatives, and a Proposed Rule is forthcoming.

The need for this action was driven by:

- Recent successes with the Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) Program in managing bluefin tuna bycatch in the pelagic longline fishery, including the shift in management focus towards individual vessel accountability in the pelagic longline fishery.
- Continued underharvest of quotas in target fisheries, particularly the swordfish quota.
- Comments from the public and the HMS Advisory Panel members indicating that certain regulations may be redundant in effect.
- Requests from the public and HMS Advisory Panel members to reduce regulatory burden and remove duplicative regulations.

## Who is affected?

The proposed measures could affect any U.S. pelagic longline commercial fishermen who fish in the Atlantic Ocean, including the Gulf of Mexico.

## What will it do?

The proposed measures are expected to increase the flexibility of pelagic longline fishermen targeting swordfish and tunas by increasing the amount of area open to fishing and reducing the Gulf of Mexico weak hook requirement from year-round to seasonal (January–June). Bluefin tuna would continue to be managed within the limits of the ICCAT-established U.S. quota and domestic quota allocations to different fishery categories, which are not affected by this action. Some of the preferred measures have an evaluation component to determine whether the area-based restrictions remain

necessary, or whether the IBQ Program, without the area-based restrictions, will adequately limit bluefin bycatch in the fishery.

The [Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#) analyzes the potential environmental impacts of a range of alternatives, including preferred alternatives, to meet the objectives. A proposed rule is expected to be published soon and will include a public hearing schedule and public comment period for the proposed rule.

The preferred alternatives are summarized below:

| <b>Preferred Alternatives in DEIS</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| Northeastern United States Closed Area | <i>Alternative A4</i><br>Undertake a review process to evaluate the continued need for the Northeastern United States Pelagic Longline Closed Area |
| Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area     | <i>Alternative B2</i><br>Elimination of the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area   |
| Gulf of Mexico Gear Restricted Areas   | <i>Alternative C3</i><br>Undertake a review process to evaluate the continued need for the Spring Gulf of Mexico Gear Restricted Areas             |
| Weak Hooks                             | <i>Alternative D2</i><br>Seasonal requirement for Weak Hooks   |

For more information, contact Craig Cockrell at 301-427-8503 OR Jennifer Cudney 727-824-5399.

Copies of the [Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#) and other supporting documents are available upon request from

Highly Migratory Species Management Division  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Phone: 301-427-8503  
Fax: 301-713-1917