

Migratory Species Committee Report
June 21, 2021
Dr. Greg Stunz, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab M, No. 1**) as written and approved the minutes (**Tab M, No. 2**) of the November 2020 meeting as written.

Highly Migratory Species Amendment 13: Three-year review of the Individual Bluefin Quota Program that addressed the directed fisheries for bluefin tuna and the incidental catch of bluefin by the pelagic longline fishery (Tab M, No. 4a and 4b)

Mr. Thomas Warren from the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) office provided an overview presentation on HMS Amendment 13. The Amendment would modify measures to the Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) program with active vessels (with a valid permit) receiving IBQ shares based on a contemporary three-year average. Regional allocations between the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) and Atlantic would change annually as fishing location of the fleet changes, and the Gulf IBQ share would be capped at no more than 35%. Addressing the recent inactivity of the purse seine fishery, allocation for purse seining would be entirely redistributed to hand gear categories (general, harpoon, angling, and reserve). Mr. Warren covered other considerations in the Amendment and reviewed the bluefin quota percentages changes that would result should the proposed changes be implemented.

Ms. Susan Boggs asked for clarification about the make up of the general fishing category for bluefin tuna and Mr. Warren replied that this category mostly encompassed commercial hook-and-line activity which is focused off North Carolina and New England. Mr. Andy Strelcheck asked for procedural clarification regarding quota allocation from inactive vessels. Mr. Warren stated that a review indicated 30% of the quota was allocated to inactive vessels. Amendment 13 would use a contemporary shifting three-year average of bluefin landings to assign shares and create a dynamic system that reflects the most recent fishing activity of participating vessels. Mr. Kevin Anson and Dr. Tom Frazer asked about how the determination of a 35% share cap was allotted to the Gulf. Mr. Warren indicated that the current 35% cap would be retained and the Amendment would allow for a potential decrease in that percentage. However, he indicated that the bluefin fishery in the Gulf is mostly incidental and did not anticipate landings would approach the 35% cap in the future.

During the discussion of Other Business, Ms. Leann Bosarge, Mr. JD Dugas, and Ms. Boggs spoke of the continued issues regarding shark depredation. They highlighted problems with sharks inflicting damage to shrimp net gear which was expensive to repair, angler safety when landing sharks, and loss of target catch during charter trips. Mr. Warren indicated his office was aware of the increasing shark predation issue and would pass along the Committee's concerns to the appropriate colleagues.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.