

**Migratory Species Committee Report**  
**June 26, 2024**  
**Dr. Kesley Banks, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab M, No. 1**) and approved the minutes (**Tab M, No. 2**) of the August 2023 meeting.

***Scoping Document: Gear Considerations in Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) (Tab M, Nos. 4a and b)***

Staff from HMS provided an overview of a scoping document to consider gear modifications for several HMS fisheries. A Committee member reported that, at the most recent HMS advisory panel (AP) meeting, the AP had recommended expanding secondary gears for bait collection beyond cast and dip nets to trapping gears for bait. HMS staff replied they had noted those AP comments and were in the process of considering those recommendations. A Committee member seconded the AP's recommendation and requested that common sense approaches be considered when expanding the allowable gears for bait fish. Several Committee members recommended considering recreational spear fishermen as conventional recreational hook-and-line anglers when regulating management measures such as bag limits.

The Committee suggested that HMS consult with state fishery agencies when proposing these changes. As an example, the state of Texas classifies sharks as a game fish and would prohibit spearfishing in state waters. The Committee commented that these potential discrepancies would need to be considered as well. Several Committee members stated that swordfish vessels using buoy gear at night could potentially interact with other swordfish fishermen that fish during the day which could create gear entanglement issues. They recommended HMS explore these effects during the development of the proposed measures. A Committee member supported the gear modification that would authorize the use of power assistance for buoy gear. A Committee member asked if those vessels using buoy gear for targeting HMS species were restricted to operations at night. HMS staff indicated that current regulations do not mandate night fishing for that gear type.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.