



NMFS Announces a Final Rule Regarding the 2015 Atlantic Shark Commercial Fishing Season

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces a final rule that establishes quotas and opening dates for the 2015 Atlantic commercial shark fisheries. Some of the quotas have changed from the proposed rule based on adjustments to account for additional landings reported as of October 15, 2014. Additionally, based on public comment, NMFS has changed the opening date of the aggregated LCS and hammerhead shark management groups in the Atlantic region from June 1 to July 1, 2015. The final adjusted quotas and opening dates are:

Region	Management Group	2015 Annual Adjusted Quota	Season Opening Dates
Gulf of Mexico	Blacktip Sharks	328.6 mt dw (724,302 lb dw)*	January 1, 2015
	Aggregated Large Coastal Sharks	156.5 mt dw (344,980 lb dw)*	
	Hammerhead Sharks	25.3 mt dw (55,722 lb dw)	
	Non-Blacknose Small Coastal Sharks	45.5mt dw (100,317 lb dw)	
	Blacknose Sharks	1.8 mt dw (4,076 lb dw)	
Atlantic	Aggregated Large Coastal Sharks	168.9 mt dw (372,552 lb dw)	July 1, 2015*
	Hammerhead Sharks	27.1 mt dw (59,736 lb dw)	
	Non-Blacknose Small Coastal Sharks	176.1 mt dw (388,222 lb dw)	January 1, 2015
	Blacknose Sharks	17.5 mt dw (38,638 lb dw)	
No regional quotas	Non-Sandbar LCS Research	50.0 mt dw (110,230 lb dw)	January 1, 2015
	Sandbar Shark Research	116.6 mt dw (257,056 lb dw)	
	Blue Sharks	273.0 mt dw (601,856 lb dw)	
	Porbeagle Sharks	1.7 mt dw (3,748 lb dw)	
	Pelagic Sharks Other Than Porbeagle or Blue	488.0 mt dw (1,075,856 lb dw)	

*Change from proposed rule

All of the shark fisheries will remain open until December 31, 2015, unless NMFS calculates that the fishing season landings have reached, or are projected to reach, 80 percent of the available quota. In that case, NMFS will publish a notice in the Federal Register of the closure for that shark species group that will be effective no fewer than 5 days from the date of filing.

This notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about the fishery. More details on the reasons regarding the decisions and responses to the public comments received are provided in the final rule for this action. Copies of these documents are available upon request from the Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (phone: 301-427-8503, fax: 301-713-1917) or on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>. For further information on this final rule and its requirements, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz or Guý DuBeck at 301-427-8503. The information will also be posted on the HMS website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>.

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Table 1. 2015 annual quotas and opening dates for the Atlantic shark fisheries. All quotas and landings are dressed weight (dw), in metric tons (mt), unless specified otherwise.

Region	Management Group	2014 Annual Quota (A)	Preliminary 2014 Landings ¹ (B)	Adjustments (C)	2015 Base Annual Quota (D)	2015 Final Annual Quota (D+C)	Season Opening Dates
Gulf of Mexico	Blacktip Sharks	274.3 mt dw (604,626 lb dw)	202.3 mt dw (446,024 lb dw)	72.0 mt dw (158,602 lb dw) ²	256.6 mt dw (565,700 lb dw)	328.6 mt dw (724,302 lb dw)	January 1, 2015
	Aggregated Large Coastal Sharks	151.2 mt dw (333,828 lb dw)	153.7 mt dw (338,923 lb dw)	- 1.0 mt dw (2,337 lb dw) ³	157.5 mt dw (347,317 lb dw)	156.5 mt dw (344,980 lb dw)	
	Hammerhead Sharks	25.3 mt dw (55,722 lb dw)	14.4 mt dw (31,733 lb dw)	-	25.3 mt dw (55,722 lb dw)	25.3 mt dw (55,722 lb dw)	
	Non-Blacknose Small Coastal Sharks	68.3 mt dw (150,476 lb dw)	66.8 mt dw (147,366 lb dw)	-	45.5 mt dw (100,317 lb dw)	45.5 mt dw (100,317 lb dw)	
	Blacknose Sharks	1.8 mt dw (4,076 lb dw)	1.4 mt dw (3,149 lb dw)	-0.2 mt dw (-437 lb dw) ⁴	2.0 mt dw (4,513 lb dw)	1.8 mt dw (4,076 lb dw)	
Atlantic	Aggregated Large Coastal Sharks	168.9 mt dw (372,552 lb dw)	101.6 mt dw (224,098 lb dw)	-	168.9 mt dw (372,552 lb dw)	168.9 mt dw (372,552 lb dw)	July 1, 2015
	Hammerhead Sharks	27.1 mt dw (59,736 lb dw)	6.0 mt dw (13,223 lb dw)	-	27.1 mt dw (59,736 lb dw)	27.1 mt dw (59,736 lb dw)	
	Non-Blacknose Small Coastal Sharks	264.1 mt dw (582,333 lb dw)	103.1 mt dw (227,202 lb dw)	-	176.1 mt dw (388,222 lb dw)	176.1 mt dw (388,222 lb dw)	January 1, 2015
	Blacknose Sharks	17.5 mt dw (38,638 lb dw)	17.4 mt dw (38,437 lb dw)	-0.5 mt dw (-1,111 lb dw) ⁴	18.0 mt dw (39,749 lb dw)	17.5 mt dw (38,638 lb dw)	

No regional quotas	Non-Sandbar LCS Research	50.0 mt dw (110,230 lb dw)	14.3 mt dw (31,543 lb dw)	-	50.0 mt dw (110,230 lb dw)	50.0 mt dw (110,230 lb dw)	January 1, 2015
	Sandbar Shark Research	116.6 mt dw (257,056 lb dw)	37.5 mt dw (82,737 lb dw)	-	116.6 mt dw (257,056 lb dw)	116.6 mt dw (257,056 lb dw)	
	Blue Sharks	273.0 mt dw (601,856 lb dw)	7.8 mt dw (17,157 lb dw)	-	273.0 mt dw (601,856 lb dw)	273.0 mt dw (601,856 lb dw)	
	Porbeagle Sharks	1.3 mt dw (2,874 lb dw)	0.5 mt dw (1,035 lb dw)	-	1.7 mt dw (3,748 lb dw)	1.7 mt dw (3,748 lb dw)	
	Pelagic Sharks Other Than Porbeagle or Blue	488 mt dw (1,075,856 lb dw)	126.7 mt dw (279,276 lb dw)	-	488.0 mt dw (1,075,856 lb dw)	488.0 mt dw (1,075,856 lb dw)	

¹ Landings are from January 1, 2014, through October 15, 2014, and are subject to change.

² This adjustment accounts for underharvest in 2014. Therefore, the Gulf of Mexico blacktip shark adjusted quota will be 328.6 mt dw for the 2015 fishing season.

³ This adjustment accounts for overharvests from 2013 and 2014. In the final rule establishing the 2014 quotas (78 FR 70500; November 26, 2013), the 2013 Gulf of Mexico aggregated LCS quota was overharvested by 6.2 mt dw (13,489 lb dw). After the final rule establishing the 2014 quotas published, late dealer reports indicated the quota was overharvested by an additional 0.1 mt dw (408 lb dw), for a total overharvest of 6.3 mt dw (13,897 lb dw). Recently, NMFS determined that the 2014 final rule overestimated the overharvest from 2013 by 1.3 mt dw (2,758 lb dw). In 2014, the Gulf of Mexico aggregated LCS quota was overharvested by 2.3 mt dw (5,095 lb dw). Therefore, this final rule reduces the Gulf of Mexico aggregated LCS quota by 1.0 mt dw (2.3 mt dw overharvest in 2014 – 1.3 mt dw overestimated from 2013). NMFS will adjust the 2015 base annual quota based on the updated overharvest estimates from 2013 and 2014.

⁴ This adjustment accounts for overharvest in 2012. After the final rule establishing the 2012 quotas published, late dealer reports indicated the blacknose shark quota was overharvested by 3.5 mt dw (7,742 lb dw). In the final rule establishing the 2014 quotas, NMFS implemented a 5-year adjustment of the overharvest amount by the percentage of landings in 2012. Thus, NMFS will reduce the Gulf of Mexico blacknose shark quota by 0.2 mt dw (437 lb dw) and the Atlantic blacknose shark quota by 0.5 mt dw (1,111 lb dw) each year from 2014 through 2018. NMFS will reduce the 2015 base annual quota based on overharvest from 2012.