

NOAA Fisheries Announces the Availability of Draft Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan: Essential Fish Habitat

NOAA Fisheries announces the availability of Draft Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan on essential fish habitat (EFH) and an associated Environmental Assessment (EA). Draft Amendment 10 would update and revise existing HMS EFH; modify existing HAPCs or designate new HAPCs for bluefin tuna, sandbar, lemon, and sand tiger sharks, as necessary; and analyze fishing and non-fishing impacts on EFH by considering environmental and management changes and new information since 2009. New information on the biology, distribution, habitat requirements, life history characteristics, migratory patterns, spawning, pupping, and nursery areas of Atlantic HMS would be considered when updating Atlantic HMS EFH designations. EFH and HAPC designations are intended to focus conservation efforts and bring heightened awareness to the importance of HMS habitat.

NOAA Fisheries seeks public comment on the updates for Atlantic HMS EFH designations and existing HAPCs as well as the new HAPCs for lemon and sand tiger sharks.

Comments on Draft Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan should be submitted online at the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal:

<http://www.regulations.gov> (enter NOAA-NMFS-2016-0117 into the search box, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments), in writing to Jennifer Cudney, NMFS Highly Migratory Species Management Division, 263 13th Ave. South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701. Comments are due by December 22, 2016

NMFS will conduct public hearing conference calls and webinars to allow for opportunities for interested members of the public from all geographic areas to submit verbal comments on Draft Amendment 10. These will be announced at a later date and in the Federal Register. NMFS has also requested time on the meeting agendas of the relevant Regional Fishery Management Councils (i.e., the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and New England Fishery Management Councils) to present information on Draft Amendment 10. Information on the date and time of those presentations will be provided on the appropriate council agendas.