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Dear Consulting Party:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces the availability of the proposed rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Amendment 2 to the Consolidated Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The proposed rule and draft EIS describe a range of management measures that could impact shark fishermen and dealers. These management measures include implementing management measures consistent with recent stock assessments for sandbar, porbeagle, dusky, blacktip, and non-sandbar LCS sharks; initiating rebuilding plans for porbeagle, dusky, and sandbar sharks; implementing quotas and retention limits consistent with stock assessment recommendations; modifying recreational measures to reduce fishing mortality of overfished stocks; modifying reporting requirements; modifying timing of shark stock assessments; clarifying timing of release for annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports; updating dehooking requirements for smalltooth sawfish; collecting shark life history information through the implementation of a shark research program; and, considering additional time/area closures proposed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Under 304(g)(1)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), NMFS is required to consult with affected Fishery Management Councils, International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) commissioners and advisory groups, and the Advisory Panels established under the Magnuson-Stevens Act regarding amendments to the FMPs for HMS. As such, we are requesting your comments on the proposed rule and enclosed Draft EIS. The proposed rule is expected to publish in the Federal Register on July 27, 2007. These documents will be available electronically on the HMS Management Division's webpage at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>.

We appreciate your comments. Please submit written comments to Michael Clark, HMS Management Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or fax to (301) 427-2592 by October 10, 2007. Comments can also be submitted via email to ShkA2@noaa.gov. For further information contact: Michael Clark, Karyl Brewster-Geisz, at (301) 713-2347 or Jackie Wilson, at (404) 806-7622.

Sincerely,

Margo Schulze-Haugen,
Chief
Highly Migratory Species Management Division

