

HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON  
FINAL CHANGES TO ROUTINE MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2009-2010 SEASON

**Proposed Thresher Shark Management Measures for Recreational Fishing**

The Highly Migratory Species Management Team (HMSMT) submits the following Supplemental HMSMT Report on proposed thresher shark management measures under Agenda Item E.3.

The thresher shark management measures under consideration by the Council are intended to address a range of conservation concerns, including:

- the growing popularity and potential for increased effort in the southern California recreational thresher fishery;
- the overlap in the location and timing of recreational fishing effort with the prime thresher shark spawning grounds and season;
- the uncertain post-release mortality resulting from the tail hooking and long fight times of large threshers.

The HMSMT agrees that a seasonal closure in the recreational thresher shark fishery is premature given that: (1) the negative economic impacts of a closure would likely be significant; and (2) recent commercial and recreational landings have remained below the 340 mt harvest guideline although there are recognized uncertainties in the data that suggest caution in this interpretation.

However, consistent with the precautionary management approach embodied in the HMS Fishery Management Plan, the HMSMT recommends adopting the following management measures:

- 1. Establish a one HMS shark of each species per day per boat limit under the bag limits options. Once a boat lands an HMS shark, targeting of that species shall no longer be allowed.**
- 2. Require mandatory data reporting for all HMS shark tournaments. The HMSMT feels that the additional data from these tournaments will allow closer monitoring of events that may not be adequately monitored under current sampling regimes given the acknowledged difficulty of samplers gaining access to private slips and marinas.**

The HMSMT recommends these management measures as a means of ensuring against further increases in the recreational catch and effort of thresher sharks without requiring significant curtailment of current recreational thresher shark fishing opportunities.

Alternatively, if the Council finds the adoption of these measures would be too restrictive or too difficult to implement for both private and commercial passenger fishing vessels, the

HMSMT would recommend that the current daily bag limit of two HMS sharks per species per day per angler be reduced to one HMS shark per species per day per angler. A review of the historic catch per angler bag data demonstrated that reducing the daily limit would have a small impact on the overall take of sharks but more importantly, the recreational fishing industry has expressed a strong desire to eliminate those instances of anglers landing more than one thresher shark in a given day.

Lastly, independent of any management action, the HMSMT would like to reiterate the need for additional efforts for proper management of HMS sharks including, but not limited to:

- Continued outreach with fishermen on best practices for increased survivorship of released sharks;
- Continued research on potential gear modifications to improve survivorship of released sharks (gear switch from j-hook to circle hook);
- An updated thresher shark stock assessment utilizing data from both the United States and Mexico fisheries;
- Identification of the spatial/temporal extent of thresher shark pupping grounds and nursery areas;
- Improved collection of recreational data, including catch-and-effort estimates from vessels departing from private access marinas;
- Better estimates of the number and condition of sharks released;
- Improved monitoring and data collection for the commercial shark hook-and-line fishery and for non-HMS fisheries such as bottom set net and small mesh drift gillnet.