

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) REPORT ON  
HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES (HMS) ACTIVITIES

**Proposed rule to implement Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission Resolutions on shark and vessel monitoring systems**

On April 25th, NMFS published a proposed rule: *Safe Handling and Release Practices for Sharks on Longline Vessels and Revision to Vessel Monitoring System Requirements in the Eastern Pacific Ocean* ([89 FR 31708](#)). The proposed rule implements provisions of two binding Resolutions adopted by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) in 2023: C-23-07 (*Conservation Measures for the Protection and Sustainable Management of Sharks*) and C-23-11 (*On the Establishment of a Vessel Monitoring System*). This proposed rule applies to U.S. vessels in the IATTC Convention Area, which is defined as waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) within the area bounded by the west coast of the Americas and by 50° N latitude, 150° W longitude, and 50° S latitude.

This proposed rule would require U.S. longline vessel owners and operators to leave live, unretained sharks in the water and cut the branchline so that less than 1 meter of trailing gear remains on the animal. If this procedure is not possible without compromising safety, the vessel owner or operator would be required to cut the branchline as close to the hook as possible. To facilitate the trimming of the branchline to the appropriate length, longline vessel owners or operators would be required to carry a line clipper meeting minimum design standards onboard the vessel and use it to cut branchline. The standards for this line clipper would be the same as those already required for Hawaii-based longline vessels.

The proposed rule would also require vessels 24 meters or more in overall length fishing for tuna or tuna-like species in the EPO to make manual reports in the event of a malfunctioning vessel monitoring system (VMS) unit. These vessels are already required to have a functioning VMS unit installed, and to notify NMFS Office of Law Enforcement in the event of a VMS unit failure. This proposed rule would add the requirement that if a VMS unit failure occurs, vessel owners and operators provide manual reports of the vessel's ID, location, date, time, speed, and course every six hours until the issue is resolved or the vessel is back in port.

Public comment on this proposed rule will close on [May 28th](#).