



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XF389]

Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Schedules for Atlantic Shark Identification

Workshops and Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, and Identification

Workshops

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public workshops.

SUMMARY: Free Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops and Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshops will be held in January, February, and March of 2026.

Certain fishermen and shark dealers are required to attend a workshop to meet regulatory requirements and to maintain valid permits. Specifically, the Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop is mandatory for all federally permitted Atlantic shark dealers. The Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshop is mandatory for vessel owners and operators who use bottom longline, pelagic longline, or gillnet gear, and who have also been issued shark or swordfish limited access permits. Additional free workshops will be conducted in 2026 and will be announced in a future notice. In addition, NMFS has implemented online recertification workshops for persons who have already taken an in-person training.

DATES: The Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops will be held on January 15, 2026, February 19, 2026, and March 5, 2026. The Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshops will be held on January 8, 2026, February 11, 2026, and March 17, 2026.

ADDRESSES: The Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops will be held in Virginia Beach, VA, Melville, NY, and Wilmington, NC. The Safe Handling, Release, and

Identification Workshops will be held in Portsmouth, NH, Marathon, FL, and Houston, TX.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Anna Quintrell by email at anna.quintrell@noaa.gov or by phone at 301-427-8503.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) fisheries (swordfish, sharks, tunas, and billfish) are managed under the 2006 Consolidated HMS Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and its amendments pursuant to the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act; 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*) and consistent with the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*). HMS implementing regulations are at 50 CFR part 635. Section 635.8 describes the requirements for the Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops and Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshops. The workshop schedules, registration information, and a list of frequently asked questions regarding the Atlantic Shark Identification and Safe Handling, Release, and Identification workshops are available online at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/atlantic-highly-migratory-species/atlantic-shark-identification-workshops> and <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/atlantic-highly-migratory-species/safe-handling-release-and-identification-workshops>.

Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops

Since January 1, 2008, Atlantic shark dealers have been prohibited from receiving, purchasing, trading, or bartering for Atlantic sharks unless a valid Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop certificate is on the premises of each business listed under the shark dealer permit that first receives Atlantic sharks (71 FR 58057, October 2, 2006). Dealers who attend and successfully complete a workshop are issued a certificate for each place of business that is permitted to receive sharks. These certificate(s) are valid for 3 years. Thus, certificates that were initially issued in 2023 will expire in 2026.

Currently, permitted dealers may send a proxy to an Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop. However, if a dealer opts to send a proxy, the dealer must designate a proxy for each place of business covered by the dealer's permit that first receives Atlantic sharks. Only one certificate will be issued to each proxy. A proxy must be a person who is currently employed by a place of business covered by the dealer's permit; is a primary participant in the identification, weighing, and/or first receipt of fish as they are offloaded from a vessel; and who fills out dealer reports. Atlantic shark dealers are prohibited from renewing a Federal shark dealer permit unless a valid Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop certificate for each business location that first receives Atlantic sharks has been submitted with the permit renewal application. Additionally, a copy of a valid dealer or proxy Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop certificate must be in any trucks or other conveyances that are extensions of a dealer's place of business.

Workshop Dates, Times, and Locations

1. January 15, 2026, 12 p.m. – 4 p.m., The Founders Inn, 5641 Indian River Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23464.
2. February 19, 2026, 12 p.m. – 4 p.m., Hilton Long Island, 598 Broad Hollow Road, Melville, NY 11747.
3. March 5, 2026, 12 p.m. – 4 p.m., Hilton Garden Inn Wilmington Mayfaire Town Center, 6745 Rock Spring Road, Wilmington, NC 28405.

Registration

To register for a scheduled Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop, please contact Angler Conservation Education at 386-682-0158. Pre-registration is highly recommended, but not required.

Registration Materials

To ensure that workshop certificates are linked to the correct permits, participants will need to bring the following specific items to the workshop:

1. Atlantic shark dealer permit holders must bring proof that the attendee is an owner or agent of the business (such as articles of incorporation), a copy of the applicable permit, and proof of identification.

2. Atlantic shark dealer proxies must bring documentation from the permitted dealer acknowledging that the proxy is attending the workshop on behalf of the permitted Atlantic shark dealer for a specific business location, a copy of the appropriate valid permit, and proof of identification.

Workshop Objectives

The Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops are designed to reduce the number of unknown and improperly identified sharks reported in the dealer reporting form and increase the accuracy of species-specific dealer-reported information. Reducing the number of unknown and improperly identified sharks will improve quota monitoring and the data used in stock assessments. These workshops will train shark dealer permit holders or their proxies to properly identify Atlantic shark carcasses.

Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshops

Since January 1, 2007, shark limited access and swordfish limited access permit holders who fish with longline or gillnet gear have been required to submit a copy of their Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshop certificate in order to renew either permit (71 FR 58057, October 2, 2006). These certificate(s) are valid for 3 years. Certificates issued in 2023 will expire in 2026. As such, vessel owners who have not already attended a workshop and received a NMFS certificate, or vessel owners whose certificate(s) will expire prior to the next permit renewal, must attend a workshop to fish with, or renew, their swordfish and shark limited access permits. Additionally, new shark and swordfish limited access permit applicants who intend to fish with longline or gillnet gear must attend a Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshop and submit a copy of their workshop certificate before either of the permits will be issued.

In addition to vessel owners, at least one operator on board vessels issued a limited access swordfish or shark permit that uses longline or gillnet gear is required to attend a Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshop and receive a certificate. Vessels that have been issued a limited access swordfish or shark permit and that use longline or gillnet gear may not fish unless both the vessel owner and operator have valid workshop certificates on board at all times. Vessel operators who have not already attended a workshop and received a NMFS certificate, or vessel operators whose certificate(s) will expire prior to their next fishing trip, must attend a workshop to operate a vessel with swordfish and shark limited access permits on which longline or gillnet gear is used.

Workshop Dates, Times, and Locations

1. January 8, 2026, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Residence Inn by Marriott Downtown Portsmouth, 100 Deer Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801.
2. February 11, 2026, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Faro Blanco, 1996 Overseas Highway, Marathon, FL 33050.
3. March 17, 2026, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Holiday Inn Express Houston Medical Center, 9300 S. Main Street, Houston, TX 77025.

Registration

To register for a scheduled Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshop, please contact Angler Conservation Education at 386-682-0158. Pre-registration is highly recommended, but not required.

Registration Materials

To ensure that workshop certificates are linked to the correct permits, participants will need to bring the following specific items with them to the workshop:

1. Individual vessel owners must bring a copy of the appropriate swordfish and/or shark permit(s), a copy of the vessel registration or documentation, and proof of identification.

2. Representatives of a business-owned or co-owned vessel must bring proof that the individual is an agent of the business (such as articles of incorporation), a copy of the applicable swordfish and/or shark permit(s), and proof of identification.

3. Vessel operators must bring proof of identification.

Workshop Objectives

The Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshops are designed to teach the owner and operator of a vessel that fishes with longline or gillnet gear the required techniques for the safe handling and release of entangled and/or hooked protected species, such as sea turtles, marine mammals, smalltooth sawfish, Atlantic sturgeon, and prohibited sharks. In an effort to improve reporting, the proper identification of protected species and prohibited sharks will also be taught at these workshops. Additionally, individuals attending these workshops will gain a better understanding of the requirements for participating in these fisheries. The overall goal of these workshops is to provide participants with the skills needed to reduce the mortality of protected species and prohibited sharks, which may prevent additional regulations on these fisheries in the future.

Online Recertification Workshops

NMFS implemented an online option for shark dealers and owners and operators of vessels that fish with longline and gillnet gear to renew their certificates in December 2021. To be eligible for online recertification workshops, dealers and vessel owners and operators need to have previously attended an in-person workshop. Information about the courses is available online at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/atlantic-highly-migratory-species/atlantic-shark-identification-workshops> and

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/atlantic-highly-migratory-species/safe-handling-release-and-identification-workshops>. To access the course please visit:
<https://hmsworkshop.fisheries.noaa.gov/start>.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: December 19, 2025.

Kelly Denit,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2025-23748 Filed: 12/22/2025 8:45 am; Publication Date: 12/23/2025]