

The Billfish Foundation October Update

This past September, TBF Science & Policy Specialist, Michael Kelly was in Washington D.C. to attend Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) advisory panel meetings. Over the course of two days stakeholders and representatives from the recreational, commercial and academia discussed current issues in HMS fisheries and raised some important topics. While there was much debate over the management of bluefin tuna, a very contentious issue, there were significant projects and issues for anglers as well. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is in the process of drafting surveys for HMS tournament operators and tournament anglers to determine their economic impact. Those of you who fish or help direct tournaments know the significant amount of time, money and effort that goes into a successful tournament. TBF was very active in providing comments to ensure the survey will capture the full scope of expenses associated with tournaments to reflect the tremendous impact they have for many local communities, businesses and contribution to conservation. Another issue raised by TBF was establishing regulations to prohibit anyone (commercial or recreational) from harvesting any HMS species that has been tagged with any form of electronic tag. Electronic - satellite tags - provide crucial, fishery independent information for important species and are vital to better management of 'data poor' species like billfish. Electronic tagging studies are not just vital for the conservation of HMS species, but represent a significant investment of time, effort and funding for academic or nonprofit organizations (the average satellite tag costs \$4,000). For more information on any of these topics, especially the HMS tournament surveys please contact TBF (Michael_Kelly@Billfish.org). Comments are currently being accepted by NMFS and can be directed to George Silva at George.silva@noaa.gov. The finalized survey will be distributed in 2016 and TBF urges you to take part. Your participation is vital to showing the tremendous impact and importance of HMS recreational fishing and its future.