



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Coastal Sharks Technical Committee Conference Call Summary June 2, 2017

Technical Committee Members: Karyl Brewster-Geisz, Bryan Frazier, Greg Skomal, Greg Hinks, Holly White, Julie Neer, Eric Schneider, Chris Scott, Angel Willey

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At the May 2017 Coastal Sharks Management Board meeting, the final rule for federal Amendment 5b was presented by NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Division. Amendment 5b implements a range of management measures to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished dusky sharks. These measures are based on the 2016 dusky shark stock assessment update that determined dusky sharks are overfished and experiencing overfishing.

The Board was asked to consider cooperative research with NOAA Fisheries to improve estimates of dusky (and other) sharks caught in state water fisheries. The Coastal Sharks Technical Committee (TC) held a conference call to discuss.

Shark Research Fishery

K. Brewster-Geisz (HMS) explained that NOAA Fisheries is looking for additional fishery dependent data to garner better estimates of dusky (and other) sharks for future stock assessments. The current shark research fishery consists of approximately 5 vessels that fish under tight restrictions and 100% observer coverage. The gear is bottom longline and is limited to no more than 300 hooks (each trip fishermen can make 2 sets only - 1st set no more than 150 hooks, 2nd set no more than 300 hooks). These fishermen must keep all dead sharks (unless it's a prohibited species or the fishing season is closed) and are allowed to fish for and sell sandbar sharks.

When trying to extend the research fishery into state waters the following issues arose:

- Fishermen are fishing for sandbar sharks, which are prohibited in state waters
- Fishermen are using bottom longline and the length may exceed the requirements of "short lines" in state waters
 - Noted on the call: The Commission's definition of short lines and the HMS definition of bottom long lines overlap.
- Fishermen keep over the commercial retention limits

- Fishermen are fishing for large coastal sharks based on a quota other than the aggregated LCS quota, which means they may be fishing when the season is closed for other LCS fishermen
- The State required NMFS to apply for the research permit; that causes issues for us and is not something we could do automatically or easily

The group discussed the language in *Section 4.3.8.2 Display and Research Permits* of the Coastal Sharks FMP. As noted in the document, a state may grant exemptions from the seasonal closure, quota, possession limit, size limit, gear restrictions, and prohibited species restrictions contained in the FMP through a state display or research permit system.

Georgia noted that although the Coastal Sharks FMP allows long lines and gill nets, those gear types are not allowed in Georgia state waters. Since Georgia does not have a commercial fishery in state waters, there is no need for fishery-dependent data collection in Georgia's territorial waters. Georgia also noted that over the 17+ seasons fishery independent work has been conducted, they have not documented any dusky sharks in State territorial waters, however, they do encounter 5 species with regularity (At. sharpnose, bonnethead, blacknose, blacktip and sandbar).

North Carolina has two concerns about the shark research fishery taking place in NC state waters; 1) The NC scientific permit application requires the applicant to be affiliated with an academic institution, 2) accurate reporting of research versus commercial landings of sharks.

Currently there is one North Carolina fishermen that participates in the HMS shark research fishery and that individual is not affiliated with a research institution. As it stands now, NOAA Fisheries would be the responsible party on the NC scientific permit application and the fishermen would be the collector. However, legally NOAA Fisheries cannot be the responsible party. The application issue would need to be resolved before the landings issue can be addressed. HMS will have further discussions with the state of North Carolina.

Regarding landings data, HMS noted that the data they receive is from the observer reports. If the individual is granted a NC scientific permit, then the group offered a suggestion to resolve the landings issue:

- HMS could ask the fishermen to sign an agreement that lets HMS forward the landings data to NC. This would then allow NC to accurately depict commercial vs research landings on NC's trip ticket system.

South Carolina will allow the HMS shark research fishery into state waters provided the individual has a SC scientific research permit. There was a request for HMS to notify the state prior to the research fishing activity.

ACTION: There was a request to ask the Florida and Virginia TC representatives about allowable gear types in state waters and if they would allow the HMS shark research fishery into their state waters.

Following the call, the Florida representative noted the ban on longlines and gillnets in state waters would not be lifted for the HMS shark research survey. In addition, the collection of dusky sharks in Florida state waters is very rare.

NOAA Fisheries Cooperative Shark Tagging Program

The cooperative shark tagging program is a collaborative effort between recreational anglers, the commercial fishing industry, and NOAA Fisheries to study the life history of Atlantic Sharks. Recreational anglers can volunteer to participate in the program. Given a lot of recreational anglers are tagging from the shore, North Carolina asked if any states require anglers to have a scientific research permit in order to participate in the volunteer tagging program.

Under SC state law, one must have a permit to tag a fish, therefore, South Carolina requires anglers to have a scientific research permit to participate. They do not require the anglers to submit a report.

Following the call, the Florida representative noted that Florida requires a special activity license for all fish tagging. This does not apply to the directors of a fishing tournament or their designee, who may tag up to 5 fish per tournament for purposes of awarding prizes.

Massachusetts, Maryland, North Carolina and Georgia do not require anglers participating cooperative tagging efforts to have a state scientific research permit.