

**MEETING SUMMARY and CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**COASTAL SHARKS ADVISORY PANEL**  
**Baltimore, Maryland**  
**July 19, 2006**

**Meeting Staff:** Ruth Christiansen (ASMFC)

**Meeting Participants:** Claude Bain; Frank Blount; Steve Segerson; Stephen Haigis; Marty Buzas; Russell Hudson; Dewey Hemilright; Frank Blum; Ernest L. Bowden, Jr.; Sonja Fordham

**Public:** Megan Caldwell (NOAA HMS); Sarah McTee (NOAA HMS)

***MEETING SUMMARY***

The first meeting of the Coastal Sharks Advisory Panel (AP) convened shortly after 10:00 am with introductions and an overview of the ASMFC Advisory Panel process presented by Ruth Christiansen.

Following questions regarding the AP Overview presentation, Ruth Christiansen presented a summary on all the public comment received on the Public Information Document (PID) for the Development of an Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Coastal Sharks.

After the public comment summary presentation, it was suggested that only those species found in Table 5 (page 15) of the PID be included in the Interstate FMP; pelagic shark species, dogfish or deepwater sharks should not be included for management purposes. In this regard, pelagic species, dogfish and deepwater shark species should only be included in the Interstate FMP in order to increase the identification of landed sharks and clarity of record keeping. It was felt that managing pelagic species not caught in state waters (except on rare occasions) would be a waste of time. In addition, states would be walking a thin line in managing species primarily caught in federal waters through some type of landings prohibition.

In a differing point-of-view, it was noted that pelagic species should not be left out of the Interstate FMP for consistency purposes. Pelagic sharks do come into state waters and are landed in state ports (i.e. the mako shark fishery in Florida occurs close to shore). In addition, a number of prohibited species are also pelagic species of whose stock status is of concern. It was also suggested that porbeagle and oceanic whitetip sharks be considered for the prohibited species list as their stock status is also of concern. Including pelagic species now avoids beginning new fishery management plan later down the road. Smooth dogfish should also be considered for inclusion in the Interstate FMP, at least as a placeholder until a sense of status achieved; relatively fast growth suggests the possibility for a sustainable smooth dogfish fishery if management is imposed.

It was strongly felt around the table that there is no reason to have unidentified shark species. States should have a goal of 95% identification. Proper identification is key to successful

management!! Some type of identification chart/guide with the most common species caught is recommended. Transparency in state landings data and how that information is provided to NMFS is needed. State by state landings information needs to be included in the Interstate FMP. Each state should be required to go to dealers with insufficient identification information, which would also aid in keeping dealers from purchasing prohibited species. States should be required to identify all shark species caught and landed, including pelagic species whether or not they are included in the Interstate FMP. Better identification and data collection would avoid dogfish landings getting mixed up with coastal shark landings in the record books.

There are many traditional ways of controlling effort and gear types for commercial fisheries, it was acknowledged that there are some non-traditional ways to limit the number of recreational fishers in a fishery (i.e. in the Florida recreational tarpon fishery fishers are only allowed to kill one tarpon a year and are required to pay a fee in order to do so).

There was broad agreement that critical nursery habitat areas should receive special protection. It was agreed that impacts of habitat loss and destruction are detrimental to coastal sharks, particularly during mating, pupping, and the first years of life. It cannot be assumed that non-consumptive activities do not have a damaging impact to critical habitat areas or sharks themselves, but these can be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Some members of the AP felt that prohibiting federally permitted vessels from fishing in state waters for the purpose of protecting nursery habitat areas discriminates against that user group.

The issue of shark bycatch was discussed and the AP identified three primary areas of concern regarding bycatch:

- bycatch of prohibited shark species
- bycatch of sharks in other fisheries, especially the shrimp, menhaden, and king/Spanish mackerel fisheries (this point is emphasized on pg. 27 of the LCS Consensus Summary Report)
- bycatch of smalltooth sawfish – because sawfish are hoped to expand from their current reduced range (FL), the Interstate FMP should at least acknowledge the status of smalltooth sawfish, which are listed as endangered under the ESA, and encourage states to adopt measures to protect the species (reduce bycatch/bycatch mortality, conserve habitat) similar in nature to the draft federal recovery plan

After discussion stemming from the summary of public comment was concluded, staff presented the AP with a summary of the 2006 Large Coastal Shark Stock Assessment results. Having participated throughout the stock assessment process, Russell Hudson provided some personal insight into the stock assessment process and why his organization (Directed Shark Fisheries, Inc.) presented a dissenting opinion statement at the end of the assessment report. Special emphasis was made regarding the sandbar shark assessment in which longline ageing information from VIMS was not included into the age-structure model thereby calling into question some of the credibility of the assessment results. It was explained by staff that while some members of the AP may not agree with the LCS stock assessment results or methods, the conclusions reached are not up for debate and are the most up-to-date (for better or worse), which management is able to work with. Other AP members expressed confidence in the credibility and technical skills of the assessors and reviewers.

It was noted that the LCS complex is comprised of 22 species. During the LCS assessment, 11 prohibited species were removed as well as blacktip and sandbar sharks. This leaves a total of 9 LCS species included in the current assessment format. In this capacity, species-specific stock assessments (as is done for blacktip and sandbar sharks) may be feasible for those 9 species. It was noted that species-specific stock assessments exist for shortfin mako and dusky sharks and may therefore be able to be managed on a species-specific level.

It was suggested that a minimum standard for data and models should be established in order to utilize the best scientific data available.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Russell Hudson and Claude Bain were elected as AP Chair and Vice-chair, respectively and without opposition.

### ***CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS for the MANAGEMENT BOARD***

1. The interstate FMP should contain commercial and recreational management measures that are at least as stringent as federal regulations, thereby creating a complimentary management system. States always have the opportunity to act further and implement more restrictive management measures and can do so in a quicker manner than the federal system. Duplicating federal regulations in state waters removes a degree of authority and autonomy from the states. Complimenting federal management measures avoids discrimination against any state. The Management Board can always give consideration to conservation equivalency if requested by a specific state.
2. As a compliance requirement of the Interstate FMP, states should have mandatory reporting requirements involving breaking out catch by species. Catch data more important than where the shark is landed, but it is recognized that this information is dependent on VMS. Because dealer reports are what NMFS currently relies on, at a minimum states should be required to identify 95% of all shark species landed.
3. The Management Board should recommend and encourage each of the Gulf States to participate in the ASMFC Advisory Panel, Technical Committee, and Plan Development process. It is recognized that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission does not hold the same regulatory authority as ASMFC does in its development of interstate fisheries management; however, encouraging individual states to participate in the process, cooperate with one another, and adopt complimentary management measures as outlined in federal shark regulations and the forthcoming Interstate FMP for Atlantic Coastal Sharks could serve to greatly improve the management of coastal sharks.
4. The AP would like the Management Board to task the Technical Committee and/or Plan Development Team with the following questions:
  - a) Why is there a difference in dressed weight conversion rates? All states (except North Carolina) and NMFS use a 1.39 rate. North Carolina uses a rate of 2.0 and which science now supports as the correct rate.
  - b) What information/data is available regarding bycatch of shark species in state waters, including the bycatch of sharks in other fisheries?

- c) The AP would like shark landings data from each state from the last five years in order to see what is being reported to NMFS. The AP would also like to see the numbers of pounds of sharks caught by state vessels versus what is caught by federal vessels. During the development of the Interstate FMP, the Management Board should evaluate and consider requesting NMFS allocate a portion of the annual quota specifically to the states. It is felt that the state information requested above will have impact upon the future potential of allocating a portion of the annual quota specifically to the states.
- d) The AP invites the Tech Committee chair to attend the next Advisory Panel meeting in order to be able to answer any scientific questions that may arise.

5. The Interstate FMP should stick to fork length for all its regulations because that is the best and most accurate way to measure whole sharks.

6. The use of species-specific assessments for both permitted and prohibited species should be investigated.

7. Allowing state regulations to be extended into Federal waters is not feasible and is an unreal request.