

**Coastal Sharks Technical Committee Meeting
Annapolis Maryland
September 24 & 25, 2007**

Present: Chris Vonderweidt (ASMFC Staff); Jack Musick (Chair); Greg Skomal (Vice-Chair); Chris Powell; Brent Winner; Fritz Rohde; Julie Neer; Carolyn Good; Karyl Brewster Geisz; Bryan Frazier; Michael Luisi; Mike Frisk; Jeff Tinsman; Russel Hudson (AP Chair, Observer);

The Coastal Sharks Technical Committee (TC) held a two-day meeting in Annapolis Maryland on September 24 and 25, 2007. The meeting began with some background information including a summary of the Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board Summer meeting, an overview of the proposed alternatives contained in federal Amendment II, and update of the Small Coastal Shark (SCS) review workshop.

Following the background presentations, the TC created a closure option for the Coastal Sharks FMP to protect pupping grounds and nursery areas and discussed the various management options contained within the plan. Recommendations are as follows. All recommendations are consensus except where noted.

4.2.5 ISSUE 4: RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENSE

States are required to create a recreational registry by 2009 under the reauthorized Magnusson-Stevens Act. Therefore, states are legally obligated to have some kind of recreational registry system that will gather recreational shark information, already in place by 2009. Requiring anything as a part of our plan may cause an unnecessary burden for states that will have to change their system a second time as part of Magnusson reauthorization.

The TC finds it most appropriate to simply ‘recommend’ recreational licenses rather than requiring them.

States are encouraged to adopt a marine fishing license to gather recreational state shark fishery information.

COMMERCIAL FISHERMAN DEFINITION (Section 4.3 Commercial Fisheries Measures)

The technical committee developed the following definition for commercial fishermen.

A fisherman is considered to be a commercial fisherman if one or both of the following is true: 1.) They have sold a shark caught in state waters during a given fishing year. For example, if a fisherman sells a shark on January 2, 2008 then they are considered a commercial shark fisherman for the remainder of the 2008 shark-fishing season. 2.) A fisherman has sharks caught in state waters on their boat which they intend to sell commercially.

POSSESSION LIMITS (Section 4.3.3.4)

The TC wants to emphasize the need for small possession limits that will discourage directed fishing in state waters.

SMOOTH DOGFISH ASSESSMENT

A rough assessment is in progress and may be completed by the ASMFC Annual Meeting. Michael Frisk of New York has fit a model to the smooth dogfish life history characteristics.

SMOOTH DOGFISH CLOSURE

The TC feels that it is premature to look at any seasonal closures to protect smooth dogfish until the assessment is complete.

4.3.4.2 DISPLAY PERMITS

Prohibited shark species such as sandtiger and dusky are harvested from state waters for display purposes. State waters are the ideal place to find juvenile sharks for the aquarium trade. Regulations concerning sharks taken for the aquarium trade are being proposed to protect depleted stocks and allow for collection of important data.

The Technical Committee is concerned that data rarely gets recorded with state display permits. The TC agreed that in general, there is no follow up for data collection once the state display permits have been granted. Aquariums will apply for a state display permit, the permit gets approved, and the data does not make it back to any kind of state database. HMS has an established display permit that catalogs shark species taken for display purposes. Because of this, the Technical committee recommends Option A.

Option A. A federal Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), Scientific Research Permit (SRP), or Letter of Authorization (LOA), is required to take sharks for research purposes. This option ensures that any shark taken in state waters for research will be counted towards the coastwide shark landings and consequently the data can be used for assessments.

4.3.4.3 RESEARCH PERMITS

Sharks research is a valuable tool for the development of stock assessments that are used for quota management. Shark research permits are being proposed to gather valuable scientific data and ensure that any sharks taken for research purposes are counted towards coastal landings.

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4.3.4.5: COMMERCIAL SIZE LIMITS

The following recommendation was unanimous sans one TC member who wished to abstain from commenting.

The Coastal Shark Technical Committee was originally tasked with creating a seasonal closure option that would protect juvenile sharks occupying state waters. Sharks are particularly vulnerable to predators while in these ‘pupping grounds’ because of their small size. Because of this, fishing pressure on juvenile sharks can have a strong negative impact on shark stocks.

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vulnerable to predators while in these ‘pupping grounds’ because of their small size. Because of this, fishing pressure on juvenile sharks can have a strong negative impact on shark stocks.

The TC is recommending a two-part strategy to protect both pups and pregnant females using size limits and a seasonal closure. The technical committee agrees that the majority of state waters would have to be closed during most of the year to effectively protect nursing grounds. As a practical alternative, the TC is suggesting size limits to protect juvenile sharks in nursery areas. The seasonal May 15 – July 15 closure offers an inadequate amount of protection if a goal of the plan is to protect juvenile sharks in pupping grounds. This plan will not protect shark pups unless commercial and recreational minimum size limits are implemented as part of this plan.

The TC has recommended a minimum size limit in state waters as the most effective way to protect juvenile sharks.

Option B. Commercial fork length of 4.5’ for sandbar, silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead.

4.3.4.7: SHARK IDENTIFICATION

Misidentification of sharks can negatively impact stock assessments, calculation of season lengths, and influence the criteria used to designate certain species as prohibited. Proper identification is paramount to the efficacy of shark regulations and management measures.

Species identification can be enhanced by the presence of fins. All sharks harvested by commercial fishermen within state boundaries must have heads, tails, and fins *attached naturally* to the carcass through landing.

The TC recommends requiring head, tails, and fins as required after the Summer Board Meeting. State shark fishermen do not have the same refrigeration and carcass dressing needs (to prevent the carcasses from spoiling) as fishermen in federal waters because they only have to travel 3 miles with their catch.

4.3.4.5: AUTHORIZED COMMERCIAL GEAR

The TC was concerned with language that allows more than 2 shortlines on any 1 vessel. They agree that having more than 2 shortlines is excessive and will lead to unnecessary bycatch.

Option G. Shortlines. Shortlines are defined as fishing lines containing 50 or fewer hooks and measuring less than 500 yards in length. A maximum of 2 shortlines are allowed per vessel.

4.3.5: SEASONAL CLOSURES

This FMP was initiated in part to provide protection in shark pupping grounds and nursery areas. Pregnant females migrate seasonally to state waters to give birth. The newly hatched sharks are particularly vulnerable during the first few years of their life while they are in state water pupping grounds. Offering protection to sharks in state water nursery and pupping grounds is thought to contribute significantly to rebuilding of overfished species.

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The seasonal closure is mainly to offer protection to pregnant female sandbar sharks, which grow to lengths in excess of the 4.5' minimum size limit.

All harvest (commercial and recreational) of sandbar, silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead will be prohibited in the state waters of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey from May 15 through July 15.

4.3.6 ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT SUITE

North Carolina has proposed a new suite of options for the state shark fishery. Selection of this suite of options will require alteration of other sections of the FMP. It was included as its own option for simplicity.

Make sandbar prohibited in state waters without a research permit.

Maintain the small coastal shark (SCS) fishery with quotas that are identical to federal waters.

Allow a 10 fish bycatch allowance (possession limit) for all non-sandbar large coastal shark species. The 10 fish bycatch allowance is intended to be low enough to eliminate directed fishing for LCS but allow retention of bycaught sharks that are taken in the SCS fishery.

No quota for LCS

The TC does not support this proposal mainly because the proposal does not set a quota for LCS sharks and would create inconsistencies between state and federal shark management. The TC feels that this proposal is very similar to the preferred alternative under Amendment II and that the Board can choose options consistent with the Federal Plan that will accomplish a LCS bycatch fishery without removing quotas and creating inconsistencies

4.3.7.1 & 4.3.7.2 LOGBOOK REQUIREMENTS

The TC recommends that all logbook requirements for state shark fishermen be removed as options in the Draft FMP. TC members agreed that most states do not have existing systems that could adequately handle commercial logbook data if the ASMFC required it. Requiring states to set up logbook systems may create unnecessary burden for states with little or no state shark fisheries.

While logbook information is beneficial to cross check dealer landings data, the TC felt that enough information would be gathered through dealer reporting.

The TC would like to emphasize that removing logbook requirements makes requiring federal commercial dealer permits even more important because these dealer reports will be the sole

source of state shark data. Federal dealers are required to take ID classes and report directly to NMFS Highly Migratory Species office.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD TO ADOPT INTERIM MANAGEMENT MEASURES UNTIL THE FMP IS IMPLIMENTED

The TC recommends the following interim coastal sharks state management measures to be adopted immediately.

- 1. Close the fishery for a species when it is closed in adjacent federal waters.*
- 2. Adopt federal size limits (recreational maximum of 4.5')*
- 3. Prohibit harvest of any species that is illegal to harvest in state waters.*

RECOMMENDATIONS TO NMFS REGARDING AMENDMENT II

The TC recommends that the Board include the following as part of its recommendations for Amendment II to the Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fisheries Management Plan.

1. Keep bull, blacktip, and spinner sharks as permitted recreational species.

It is proposed to prohibit recreational harvest of certain species that can be misidentified with prohibited species. The TC agreed that bull, blacktip, and spinner sharks are unique enough that they will not be confused with prohibited species, and that these species stocks are healthy enough to allow for some recreational take.

2. Keep Atlantic and Gulf region management units.

Current Atlantic State management units are made up of The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC). Federal shark management units should mirror state management units. There is also evidence that separate genetic stocks of some species exist in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic.

3. Start the fishing season on July 15

The NMFS is suggesting *one season* as part of its preferred alternative for Amendment II rather than three trimesters, as current shark regulations stipulate. The trimesters are in place because they give fishermen from all regions a chance to harvest sharks. Large coastal sharks are found in warm South Atlantic waters on January 1, when the fishing season currently begins. If the small federal quota becomes available on January 1, it will be harvested before sharks have migrated north—and consequently have become available to fishermen in the North Atlantic.

If the ASMFC implements a seasonal LCS closure from May 15 – June 15 ranging from Virginia to New Jersey, and our fishery opens and closes with the federal quota (as members of the Board have proposed), then the fishery will be closed well before sharks are available to state shark fishermen in the Northern Atlantic region.