

MEETING SUMMARY AND CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS
COASTAL SHARKS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
July 25, 2006
Baltimore, Maryland

Meeting Staff: Bob Beal (ASMFC)

Meeting Participants: Carolyn Belcher (GA DNR); Brent Winner (FL FWC); Matthew Gates (CT DEP); Bryan Frazier (SC DNR); Fritz Rohde (NC DMF); Karyl Brewster-Geisz (NMFS HMS); Mike Frisk (Stonybrook); Michael Luisi (MD DNR); Jeff Tinsman (DE DFW); Greg Skomal (MA DMF); Julie Neer (NMFS SEFSC)

MEETING SUMMARY

The first meeting of the Coastal Sharks Technical Committee (TC) began with a presentation of the 2006 Large Coastal Shark stock assessment by Julie Neer. Of the 22 LCS species managed by NMFS, 11 are prohibited and sandbar and blacktip sharks are assessed separately leaving a total of nine species comprising the LCS assessment. It was emphasized the assessment is in numbers of sharks and not biomass.

The modeling approaches used in the 2006 LCS Complex stock assessment were a Bayesian SPM and a state-space Bayesian SPM. A number of sensitivity analyses were also conducted. Two sets of data were not included as part of the LCS assessment: 1) data from Frank Schwartz of North Carolina was not included due to data ownership/transfer issues and 2) updated data from the South Carolina longline fishery was not included because variation in the set-time is uncertain.

According to the 2006 assessment, the LCS complex is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, however this assessment of the complex was not supported by the peer review panel. This is different from results reached during the 2002 LCS assessment, which said the complex was overfished and overfishing was occurring. The difference in conclusions from the two different assessments is most likely attributed to scrutiny of data rather than stock restoration.

The 2006 LCS Review Panel recommended assessing shark species on an individual basis instead of the complex as a whole because of the variation encountered in life history data (i.e. 3 pups vs. 12 pups). The assessment used the best available data and the best model possible.

For the 2006 sandbar shark assessment, the input catch series used included commercial and unreported commercial; recreational; Mexican and unreported Mexican; and menhaden discard. The assessment used the best data available and the best model possible. **According to the 2006 stock assessment, sandbar sharks are overfished and overfishing is occurring. The peer review panel supported the assessment and agreed that the data and assessment are the**

best possible. The stock assessment provides the rebuilding timeframe and overall total allowable catch for the stock.

Blacktip sharks were assessed as two separate stocks: an Atlantic stock and a Gulf of Mexico stock. For the Atlantic blacktip shark assessment, the best data and model were used, but the **status of Atlantic blacktip sharks is unknown.** The peer review panel noted that catches should not change. For the Gulf of Mexico blacktip sharks assessment, the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The peer review panel did not provide a total allowable catch estimate, but suggested that catches not increase.

In order to address the uncertainties found in the 2006 LCS stock assessment, studies have begun to further explore life history information for the nine LCS species and data collection/compilation has begun for the 11 prohibited LCS species.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a Technical Committee Chair and Vice-chair were not elected.

RECOMMENDATIONS for the MANAGEMENT BOARD

Issue 1

1. Add language suggested for the bycatch objective consistent with that recommended by public comment.

Issue 2

1. Interstate regulations should complement federal regulations only, but consistent regulations along the coast will benefit fishermen through simplicity as well as the assessment.
2. Coastwide regulations may not protect nursery areas, etc. so states need to have flexibility in order to address seasonal migrations and habitat issues. Simply mirroring federal regulations would not allow for this. Primary and secondary habitat delineation should be an important component of the Interstate FMP (unable to adequately address at the federal level).
3. States should be allowed to be less restrictive if they have the necessary data to show there is no conservation problem (conservation equivalency). Consistent monitoring to show continued conservation equivalency would need to be done.
 - a. Concern over localized issues effecting species stock; annual or seasonal abundance
 - b. State regulations may also need to consider decadal trends
4. State rules (landing laws) can influence shark landings in states and may override federal regulations.

Issue 3

1. All federal shark groupings and species should be included in the Interstate FMP.
2. The Management Board should consider adding smooth dogfish to the Interstate FMP; however, it is recognized that smooth dogfish may take away time and focus from the LCS, SCS, prohibited, and pelagic species. Smooth dogfish may be considered under another Interstate FMP sometime in the future.

3. Consideration could be given towards adjusting the current federal shark groupings in an effort to create more groups with smaller numbers of more closely related shark species as a way of better taking into account species life history and biology.
4. The Management Board could consider adding some additional LCS species to the prohibited species list based on current status and basic life history information
5. The TC noted that Blacknose and finetooth sharks (SCS species) rarely meet the federal recreational minimum size limit, essentially making them prohibited species. Therefore, the majority of harvest for these two species in federal waters is from the commercial sector.

Issue 4

1. Specific language relating to the finning of sharks (reference international and CITES) and protected species interactions needs to be included in the Interstate FMP.
 - a. Economics of the fin trade should be investigated.
2. Scientific and public display permitting should match federal regulations on this issue. There should be accurate paper trails to account for each shark collected.
3. Collecting detailed landings information by state including numbers, size, and location should be required. ACCSP should be able to address this issue when fully online.
4. If tournaments are occurring in state waters only, registration should mirror federal requirements.
5. When the fishery for large coastal sharks is closed in the EEZ because the quota has been reached, the fishery should also be closed in state waters.
6. It was noted that North Carolina has been approached about opening their strike net fishery.

Issue 5

1. The TC has no comment on this issue.

Other Issues

1. The need for species-specific stock assessments is very important for adequate and effective shark management, but it is recognized that this approach is possible only if there is enough data available for that particular species (i.e., fisheries dependent landings; fisheries independent monitoring; life history, age, growth, and reproductive information, etc.).