

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Coastal Sharks Technical Committee

January 6, 2010

Conference Call Summary

Present : Greg Skomal (Chair, MA DMF), Eric Schneider (RIDFW), Jack Musick (VIMS), Mike Frisk (Stony Brook U), Leanne Southward-Haugen (NMFS), Guy DuBeck (NMFS), Brent Winner (FL FWC), Julie Neer (SAFMC), Russ Babb (NJ DFW), Clark Gray (NC DMF), Bryan Frasier (SC DNR), and Angel Willey (MD DNR).

The Coastal Sharks Technical Committee (TC) convened via phone conference to make recommendations for coastal sharks specifications in 2010+. The Interstate Fisheries Management Plan for Atlantic Coastal Sharks allows the Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board (Board) to set a quota for smooth dogfish only and possession limits for the Large Coastal (LCS), Small Coastal (SCS), Pelagic and Smooth Dogfish Species Groups for up to 5 years. The FMP specifies that the TC will review the best available data and make quota and possession limit recommendations to the Board prior to specifications being set. The Board set a 33 fish possession limit for LCS species in 2009.

Under other business, the TC also reviewed a conservation equivalency/*de minimis* measure submitted by Florida.

Coastal Sharks Specifications

The TC recommends continuing with a maximum possession limit of 33 fish for the LCS Species Group for the 2010 fishing season and no other measures for the other species groups. This recommendation is consistent with coastal shark possession limits in federal waters. The TC agrees that consistent specifications in state and federal waters are important to the plan minimizing confusion for fishermen and law enforcement officers.

Other Business: Florida Conservation Equivalency Proposal

Florida submitted a set of coastal sharks regulation to the Plan Review Team (PRT), which included several measures that are more restrictive than the FMP requires, but do not include a 54" recreational possession limit for blacktip sharks (as required under *Section 4.2.4 Recreational Minimum Size Limits*). Upon review, the PRT could not determine the impact of exempting Florida anglers from the size limit for blacktip sharks and asked for TC input. Upon review, the TC was concerned that this exemption may compromise the conservation value of the FMP because it allows for the significant harvest of juveniles of a species whose stock status

is unknown. The TC does not recommend exempting Florida from the 54” size limit for blacktips.

The Florida regulations, as submitted, will apply to both the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic sides of the state and include a 1 fish per person per day commercial possession limit for all shark species. The TC acknowledges a conservation benefit will result from these more stringent regulations but does not agree that the benefit necessarily warrants allowing recreational fishermen to harvest blacktip sharks under 54”. Blacktip sharks less than 54” are likely juveniles and the 2006 LCS stock assessment found the status of this species to be unknown. The TC feels that it is risky to liberalize the size limit until the status of the stock is known. Juvenile blacktip sharks are abundant in Florida’s bays and estuaries and recreational anglers could potentially remove a significant number of them.