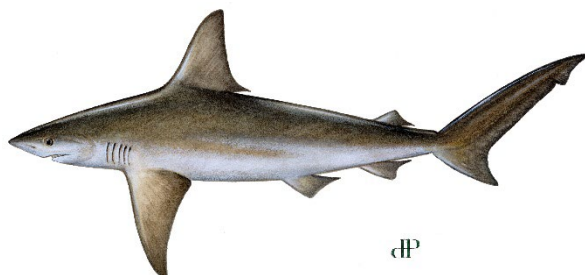


INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Coastal Sharks



Species Range

Atlantic coast waters including the Gulf of Mexico and the waters around Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Management Unit

Massachusetts - Florida

Stock Status

The Interstate FMP for Atlantic Coastal Sharks does not define ‘overfished’ or ‘overfishing.’ The stock status determinations are all based on NMFS criteria. Stock status is assessed by species complex for most coastal shark species and by individual species when enough data is available for an individual assessment.

Involved States and Jurisdictions

MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NOAA Fisheries

Active Boards/Committees

Coastal Sharks Management Board, Coastal Sharks Technical Committee, Coastal Sharks Plan Review Team, Coastal Sharks Plan Development Team, Coastal Sharks Advisory Panel

Chairs

Board, Chair – Mike Luisi (10/2025);

Vice Chair – Ben Dyar

Technical Committee, Chair – Angel Willey (6/2020); Vice-Chair – Vacant

Advisory Panel, Chair – Vacant

Staff Lead

Caitlin Starks, CStarks@asmfc.org

Species or Complex Name	Stock Status	
	Overfished	Overfishing
Porbeagle	Yes	No
Blue	No	No
Shortfin mako	Yes	Yes
All other pelagic sharks	Unknown	Unknown
Atlantic Blacktip	No	No
Aggregated Large Coastal Sharks - Atlantic Region	Unknown	Unknown
Atlantic Sharpnose	No	No
Bonnethead	Unknown	Unknown
Finetooth	No	No
Scalloped Hammerhead	No	No
Smooth Hammerhead	Unknown	No
Great Hammerhead	Yes	No
Blacknose	Yes	Yes
Atlantic Smooth Dogfish	No	No
Sandbar	Yes	No
Dusky	Yes	Yes
All other prohibited	Unknown	Unknown

Current Management Overview

Commercial and recreational fishermen are prohibited from possessing silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead shark species from May 15 – July 15 from Virginia through New Jersey to protect pupping female sandbar sharks.

Recreational fishermen are prohibited from harvesting any species which is illegal to land in federal waters and must keep the fins attached naturally to the carcass through landing. Smooth dogfish are not managed in federal waters and anglers may harvest them. Recreational fishing pressure is controlled through possession limits and minimum size limits. Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, blacknose, bonnethead and smooth dogfish do not have a size limit. Hammerhead sharks have a 6.5’ minimum size limit. All other commercially allowed species have a minimum size limit of 4.5’. In addition, recreational anglers can only harvest sharks caught with a handline or rod and reel.

The commercial fishery is managed based on maximum sustainable yield using quotas and possession limits to control harvest level and effort. Shark species are split into eight species groups based on fisheries, biology, and stock status of the various species. These groups are Prohibited, Research, Small Coastal (SCS), Blacknose, Aggregated Large Coastal (LCS), Hammerhead, Pelagic, and Smoothhound.

Fishermen are prohibited from catching or landing any species in either the Prohibited or Research Species Groups without a state display or research permit. Fishermen may harvest any species contained in the Smoothhound, SCS, LCS, Hammerhead, Blacknose and Pelagic species groups as long as the fishery is open and all sharks are caught according to the regulations contained in the FMP. The ASMFC does not set quotas for the SCS, LCS, Hammerhead, Blacknose or Pelagic species groups but rather opens and closes the fishery in response to NMFS opening and closing the fishery in federal waters. The Board may set a quota for smooth dogfish but is not required to. Fishing effort for the Smooth Dogfish, SCS, LCS, Hammerhead, Blacknose and Pelagic species groups is controlled through possession limits.

Species Group	Species within Group
Prohibited	Sand tiger, bigeye sand tiger, whale, basking, white, dusky, bignose, Galapagos, night, reef, narrowtooth, Caribbean sharpnose, smalltail, Atlantic angel, longfin mako, bigeye thresher, sharpnose sevengill, bluntnose sixgill and bigeye sixgill sharks
Research	Sandbar sharks
Non-Blacknose Small Coastal	Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, and bonnethead sharks
Blacknose	Blacknose sharks
Aggregated Large Coastal	Silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, and nurse sharks
Hammerhead	Scalloped hammerhead, great hammerhead and smooth hammerhead
Pelagic	Shortfin mako*, porbeagle, common thresher, oceanic whitetip*, and blue sharks
Smoothhound	Smooth dogfish and Florida smoothhound sharks

Commercial fishermen must have a general state commercial fishing license or permit to harvest sharks. Dealers are required to hold a federal Commercial Shark Dealer permit to buy and sell sharks. Federal dealer permits were required in order to monitor the quota as efficiently as possible and reduce the chance of quota overages. Fishermen may use handlines, gillnets, trawl nets, shortlines, pound nets/fish traps, and weirs to harvest sharks commercially. Commercial fishermen must use circle hooks and attend a Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshop offered by NOAA Fisheries in order to harvest sharks using shortlines. With the exception of a seasonal exemption for smooth dogfish, commercial fishermen must land sharks with the fins and tail attached. Commercial fishermen may remove smooth dogfish fins from March through June, but the fin-to-carcass ratio may not exceed 12%.

Management Plan History

[Interstate Fisheries Management Plan for Atlantic Coastal Sharks \(August 2008\)](#)

The Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Management Board (Board) approved the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Coastal Sharks after a 3-year development process. Prior to this plan, shark management in state waters consisted of disjointed state-specific regulations. Federal shark management began with the Fisheries Management Plan for Sharks of the Atlantic Ocean in 1993. Since then, federal shark management evolved as the shark fishery changed, while state regulations continued to lack continuity throughout the range of the sharks. This prior lack of consistent state regulations created problems for law enforcement officials who had difficulty enforcing and prosecuting violators and fishermen who had to learn several sets of regulations between different states and federal waters.

Since the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Sharks is mostly complementary to federal regulations, it closes loopholes and allows for joint specification setting throughout the entire Atlantic shark range. This Fishery Management Plan also protects shark nurseries and pupping grounds that are found primarily in state waters. Interstate regulations provide protection to sharks during a particularly vulnerable stage in their life cycle in a location that federal jurisdiction cannot protect.

[Addendum I \(September 2009\)](#)

Approved in September 2009, Addendum I modifies the FMP to allow commercial fishermen to process (remove the fins of) smooth dogfish at sea from March – June of each year, but also requires a 95-5% carcass to fin ratio for all dressed smooth dogfish carcasses. This Addendum also removes recreational smooth dogfish possession limits, as well as the 2-hour gill-net check requirement for commercial fishermen, which applied to all shark species.

[Addendum II \(May 2013\)](#)

Approved in May 2013, Addendum II modifies Addendum I to allow commercial fishermen to process (remove the fins of) smooth dogfish at sea year-round but requires a 12-88% fin-to-carcass ratio for all dressed smooth dogfish carcasses. This ratio is consistent with the Shark Conservation Act of 2010. Addendum II also allocates state-shares of the upcoming federal smoothhound shark quota based on historical landings from 1998-2010.

[Addendum III \(October 2013\)](#)

Addendum III modifies the species groups to ensure consistency with NOAA Fisheries. It creates two new species groups (Blacknose and Hammerhead Species Groups). The addendum also increases the recreational size limit for all hammerhead sharks species to 78” fork length.

[Addendum IV \(August 2016\)](#)

Addendum IV allows smooth dogfish carcasses to be landed with corresponding fins removed from the carcass as long as the total retained catch, by weight, is composed of at least 25 percent smooth dogfish, consistent with federal management measures.

[Addendum V \(October 2018\)](#)

Addendum V allows the Board to respond to changes in the stock status of coastal shark populations and adjust regulations through Board action rather than an addendum, ensuring greater consistency between state and federal shark regulations. Addendum V allows the Board to change a suite of commercial and recreational measures, such as recreational size and possession limits, season length, and area closures (recreational and commercial), in addition to the current specifications for just the commercial fishery, throughout the year when needed. Under this provision, if the Board chooses to adjust measures through Board action, the public will be able to provide comment prior to Board meetings, as well as at Board meetings at the discretion of the Board Chair. Additionally, the Board can still implement changes in shark regulations through an addendum.

Effective July 1, 2020, the Board required the use of non-offset circle hooks for the recreational shark fishery in state waters. In May 2022, the Board approved a zero retention limit in state waters for Atlantic shortfin mako sharks for both recreational and commercial fisheries. In May 2024, the Board established a zero possession limit for oceanic whitetip sharks for recreational and commercial fisheries. These measures are consistent with those implemented by NOAA Fisheries for federal HMS permit holders.

Pending Actions

None

Annual Events

- Compliance Reports are due by August 1
- Fishery Management Plan Review
- Specifications are set annually, typically at the Annual meeting
- HMS has biannual AP meetings in the spring and fall which are open to the public

Other Items of Interest

- At the 20th meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) added all *Mustelus* species to Appendix II of CITES with an 18-month delayed implementation, effective June 5, 2027. *Mustelus* species include smooth dogfish, Florida smoothhound, and Gulf

smoothhound sharks. The international trade of species included in Appendix II requires the issuance of CITES export permits or re-export certificates by the exporting/re-exporting country. This means that, as of June 5, 2027 specific permits will be required from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to import, export, or re-export smoothhound sharks.

- NOAA Fisheries is seeking comments on a [proposed rule](#) to revise the commercial Atlantic blacknose shark and recreational Atlantic shark fisheries management measures. The proposed rule would remove the commercial blacknose shark management boundary in the Atlantic region, modify the commercial retention limit for blacknose sharks in the Atlantic region, and remove commercial management group quota linkages, and in recreational shark fisheries would revise the recreational minimum size limits and retention limits for Atlantic sharks. NOAA Fisheries will accept public comments until May 29, 2026.