



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Coastal Sharks Technical Committee Meeting Summary Conference Call September 16, 2015

Technical Committee Members: Angel Willey (MD), Brent Winner (FL), Bryan Frazier (SC), Eric Schneider (RI), Greg Hinks (NJ), Holly White (NC), Jack Musick (VA), Scott Newlin (DE), Julie Neer (SAFMC), Enric Cortes (NOAA), Karyl Brewster-Geisz (NOAA)

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Guest Presenter: Dean Courtney (NOAA)

The Coastal Sharks Technical Committee (TC) held a conference call to discuss the proposed 2016 fishery specifications, the final rule for Amendment 6 to the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan, review the Atlantic smooth dogfish (smoothhound shark) stock assessment, review the proposed rule on HMS Amendment 9, and recommend a species for the 2018 SEDAR benchmark stock assessment.

The [proposed 2016 fishery specifications](#) were released on August 18, 2015. There was TC discussion regarding the proposed opening date of January 1, 2016 for the fishery (Table 1). There was concern an early LCS opening date would result in a shortened LCS season. The group discussed two recent opening date examples:

- In 2013, the fishery opened on January 1, 2013 and the season lasted nine months (closing on September 30, 2015)—the longest fishing season in recent years.
- Whereas, in 2014, the aggregated large coastal shark and hammerhead commercial group fishing seasons opened on June 1, 2014 and lasted through November 26, 2014 (six months).

NOAA Fisheries noted its intent as specified in both the proposed specifications and the [final rule for Amendment 6](#) (published on August 18, 2015) is to increase management flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of the Atlantic shark fishery. For example, the commercial retention limit (CRL) prior to Amendment 6 was set at 36 LCS other than sandbar sharks per trip for directed permit holders. Amendment 6 created a default CRL of 45 (and a maximum of 55) LCS other than sandbar sharks per trip for directed permit holders. As part of the flexibility measures NOAA Fisheries plans to increase or decrease the LCS CRL anywhere from 55 LCS to 0 LCS to ensure equitable distribution of the resource throughout the fishing season.

Landings will be monitored on a weekly basis and an adjustment to the LCS CRL will be evaluated when 30% of the quota is harvested, thereby controlling the quota to ensure equitable fishing opportunities for all fishermen and regions.

South Carolina is considering a delayed opening date, possibly March 1, for the SCS fishery to prevent the blacknose quota from being harvested too quickly. North Carolina supports the January 1 opening date due to Atlantic sharpnose landings in January and the desire for a year round fishery above the 34° 00' N. latitude management boundary.

States have concerns about implementing a variable commercial retention limits for LCS. In some cases, states have proclamation authority which allows them to amend regulations within 48 hours, but in other states it would likely take 2-3 months to amend the commercial retention limits. Overall, the TC supports increased management flexibility and complementing the federal regulations. **ACTION: ASMFC to consider the potential impacts of variable commercial retention limits within a season and draft text complimenting the federal regulations or an agreed upon alternative. How much times does HMS need to give ASMFC prior to a CRL being adjusted?**

NOAA Fisheries presented the 2015 benchmark stock assessment for the Atlantic smooth dogfish (smoothhound) and the related proposed rule for Amendment 9. The TC reviewed the assessment results that indicated the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring.

The TC reviewed the schedule for the upcoming stock assessments (Table 2) and discussed select species that should be considered for the 2018 benchmark stock assessment. NOAA Fisheries would prefer sandbar or Atlantic blacktip based in part on constituent requests; however, there was no overall TC consensus on which species should be chosen. There were 3 votes for Atlantic blacktip given the previous assessment (SEDAR 11) in 2006 resulted in an unknown stock status. There was 1 vote for the sandbar shark given the last assessment was in 2010 (SEDAR 21). The next assessment for a sandbar shark will be a benchmark stock assessment because a new assessment model is necessary; an update assessment is not an option. In general, most sharks need a benchmark assessment due to changing data, changing information on stocks, and changing assessment methodologies.

There was discussion about additional species of sharks that ought to be assessed. NOAA Fisheries noted there are only two stock assessment scientists available to conduct assessments for 45 known stocks. To date, 17 stocks have been assessed domestically (via SEDAR) or internationally (via ICCAT). An update stock assessment takes less than a year to complete, whereas a benchmark stock assessment takes approximately two years.

Once a shark has an initial benchmark stock assessment then there is a subsequent need for assessment updates. Time and resource constraints make it difficult for unassessed sharks (28 stocks), which will require an initial benchmark stock assessment, to be a practical option for the 2018 benchmark stock assessment. Based on a request raised at its Advisory Panel meeting, NOAA Fisheries is considering options including the possibility of hiring a contractor to help

conduct assessments. There is less flexibility in choosing which species are chosen for the ICCAT stock assessments because species are chosen by international negotiation.

Table 1. Proposed 2016 quota and opening dates for Atlantic sharks

Region	Management Group	2016 Proposed Annual Quota	Difference from the 2015 Annual Quota	Proposed Season Opening Dates
Atlantic	Aggregated Large Coastal Sharks	168.9 mt dw (372,552 lb dw)	-	January 1, 2016
	Hammerhead Sharks	27.1 mt dw (59,736 lb dw)	-	
	Non-Blacknose Small Coastal Sharks	264.1 mt dw (582,333 lb dw)	+88 mt dw	
	Blacknose Sharks (South of 34° N. lat only)	15.7 mt dw (34,700 lb dw)	-1.8 mt dw	
No Regional Quotas	Non-Sandbar LCS Research	50.0 mt dw (110,230 lb dw)	-	January 1, 2016
	Sandbar Shark Research	90.7 mt dw (199,943 lb dw)	-25.9 mt dw	
	Blue Sharks	273.0 mt dw (601,856 lb dw)	-	
	Porbeagle Sharks	1.7 mt dw (3,748 lb dw)	+1.7 mt dw	
	Pelagic Sharks Other than Porbeagle or Blue	488.0 mt dw (1,075,856 lb dw)	-	

Table 2. Upcoming Stock Assessments

YEAR	SPECIES	ICCAT	SEDAR
2015	Blue	X	
	Smoothhound (2 stocks)		X Benchmark
2016	Shortfin mako	X	
	Dusky		X Update
2017	Porbeagle	X	
	Blacktip (GOM)		X Update
2018	OPEN		X Benchmark, finalized in 2019