

# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## Coastal Sharks Technical Committee Call Summary

*Wednesday March 28, 2018*

**Attendees:** Lisa Hollensead (NC), Brent Winner (FL), Wilson Laney (USFWS), Chris Scott (NY), Angel Willey (MD), Carolyn Belcher (GA), Eric Schneider (RI), Karyl Brewster-Geisz (NOAA HMS), Greg Hinks (NJ), Greg Skomal (MA), Julie Neer (SAFMC), Scott Newlin (DE), Matt Gates (CT)

**Staff:** Kirby Rootes-Murdy

1) **Welcome/Review draft agenda** (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)

The group nominated Bryan Frazier to become TC Chair and Angel Willey to become TC Vice Chair.

2) **Presentation on Atlantic shortfin mako shark stock assessment and emergency rule** (*K. Brewster-Geisz*)

Karyl Brewster-Geisz presented to the TC a summary of the Atlantic shortfin mako stock assessment and the recently implemented emergency management measures in response to the assessment. At the November 2017 ICCAT Meeting, the recent stock assessment on Atlantic shortfin mako was presented, with a finding that the resource is overfished and overfishing is occurring. The assessment was completed in Summer 2017, and included a new modelling approach (stock synthesis), longer time series of catch data (1950-2015), sex-specific biological parameters, updated length composition information, and new satellite tagging data. The new reference points were in the following ranges:  $B_{2015}/B_{MSY} = 0.57-0.85$  and  $F_{2015}/F_{MSY} = 1.93-4.38$ . To address the new stock assessment status, it was determined at the ICCAT Meeting that reductions of approximately 72-79% from current landings levels are needed to prevent further declines in the population and a reduction to 0 metric tons landings are needed to rebuild the resource by 2040. To address the needed reductions in landings, NOAA implemented earlier in March the following measures: an increase in the minimum size limit (fork length) for the recreational fishery from 54" to 83" and a prohibition of landings in the commercial fishery for all gear types with the exception of the pelagic longline fleet. For the pelagic longline vessels that have an HMS permit, electronic monitoring devices are required in order to retain sharks that are dead at haul back; any live sharks must be released. These emergency measures have been implemented on an interim basis through August 2018 and may be extended for up to 6 months at that time. At the next ICCAT Meeting in November 2018 an evaluation of reduction in landings will be evaluated for 2018 and different measures may be recommended to be implemented for member countries; the US would be bound to implement new

recommended measures into place for HMS permit holders. At the same time, NOAA HMS has begun a scoping process for Amendment 11 that puts forth a range of alternatives to address reducing Atlantic shortfin mako fishing mortality in US federal waters.

The TC discussed the emergency measures and how such measures could be implemented in state waters; states can individually move forward with implementing the measures if they chose, but to be compelled to would likely require an Addendum to the FMP. The Board could also take emergency action to compel the states to implement the emergency rule measures; if this approach were to be taken, there are a number of procedural steps including holding at least 4 public hearings that would be required. Next the group discussed how many landings come from state waters relative to landings from federal waters; many were of the opinion that Atlantic shortfin mako commercial landings from state waters constitute a small percentage of overall landings, and that similarly most recreational catch and harvest occurs in federal waters due to the species preference for open ocean habitat/pelagic habits.

The TC was tasked by the Board Chair to review the stock assessment and consider the potential conservation benefit of implementing the emergency measures in state waters. Taking into consideration the likely very low landings levels, the TC indicated that implementing the emergency measures in state waters would likely not have significant impact as most landings are coming from federal waters. Additionally, the timing of the emergency measures- (that they will be up for potential renewal in less than 6 months and may change between now and end of year), would present challenges if the states need to change measures more than once before the end of the year. There were concerns raised by TC members that in not adopting the emergency rule measures in state waters, inconsistency in regulations may create some enforcement challenges for state permitted recreational anglers & for-hire vessels. Many indicated that it would better to provide comments in the scoping process for Amendment 11 and recommend that states individually implement the emergency measures if possible to have more consistency in measures between state and federal waters.

### 3) **Presentation on sandbar shark stock assessment** (*K. Brewster-Geisz*)

Next Karyl presented a summary of the sandbar shark stock assessment results. A new modeling approach was used (stock synthesis 3) that included replication of the previous assessment (SEDAR 21) that matched the biomass trend over the last 2 decades; the stock status is overfished but overfishing isn't occurring; and that based on the biomass projection the Total Allocation Catch could be increased by approximately 12%. While the Assessment passed peer-review it has not yet been officially adopted yet by NOAA HMS for management use.

The TC was tasked by the Board Chair to review the recent stock assessment and provide recommendation on potential management actions. The Sandbar Shark fishery is research take only; given that there is not a commercial fishery and NOAA HMS has not taken steps to adjust the management program for Sandbar sharks at this time, the TC had no formal recommendations to the Board other than to maintain status quo measures.

#### 4) **Update on Oceanic Whitetip Sharks ESA Status** (*K. Brewster-Geisz*)

Next, the TC was presented information on the new Endangered Species Act (ESA) status (Threatened) for Oceanic Whitetip Sharks. This status change was due to a status review that was initiated by Defenders of Wildlife to list the global species as threatened or endangered under the ESA. The status review took into account life history parameters which include being long lived (up to 20 years), late maturity (6-7 years for both sexes in the Atlantic DPS), lengthy gestation (9-12 months) and low fecundity (5-6 pups with pupping every other year). Additionally the status review found that within the global commercial fishery that fishing mortality is likely too high and that there are inadequate regulations in other parts of the world; this combined with the market demand for shark fins has increased illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and trafficking. While NOAA has changed the status to threatened under the ESA, there are additional analyses that will need to take place, namely section 7 consultations for relevant fisheries that may interact with the species. These consultations can take time. Such consultation is already underway for NOAA HMS fisheries.

The TC was tasked by the Board Chair to review the status change and provide the Board with any recommendation on potential management responses. The TC noted that the species is generally not found in state waters due to its preferred habitat of Open Ocean in water depths of greater than 184 meters. One TC member noted that most of the ASMFC state are north of the known range (Oceanic whitetip sharks are found worldwide in warm tropical and subtropical waters between 20° North and 20° South latitude, but can be found up to about 30° North and South latitude during seasonal movements to higher latitudes in the summer months<sup>1</sup>). Given there was no proposed management changes at this time by NOAA HMS, the TC had no formal recommendations to the Board other than to maintain status quo measures but to consider moving the species to the prohibited species list once consultations are completed.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Oceanic Whitetip Sharks. <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/fish/oceanic-whitetip-shark.html#description>