

Small Coastal Sharks Collected Under the Exempted Fishing Program Managed by the Highly Migratory Species Management Division

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Background

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) may exempt individuals from fishery regulations in Federal waters that would otherwise prohibit collection of species managed under a Fishery Management Plan (FMP). These activities may include: limited testing of fishing gear, collection of specimens for public display, scientific data collection, investigating bycatch, and methods to improve safety at sea. These exemptions are consistent with provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). Several types of permits are issued under this program, including: Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Scientific Research Permits (SRPs), Display Permits, and Letters of Acknowledgement (LOAs). The type of permit depends on the target species, the fishing platform (fishing vessel versus research vessel), and the intent of the collection. Regulatory exemptions typically include, but are not limited to, permitting requirements, fishing seasons, prohibited species, minimum sizes, time and area closures, authorized gear, and reporting requirements.

In the 1999 FMP, NMFS established an annual quota of 60 metric tons whole weight (mt ww) for public display and scientific research of sharks. The Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division monitors the quantity of sharks that are authorized for collection under the program and requires interim and annual reporting of all species harvested, collected, tagged, or caught as bycatch. The HMS Management Division maintains an Access database which tracks the number of HMS authorized and interacted with (kept, discarded alive, discarded dead, tagged and released) under the exempted fishing program. This database has been maintained since 2000. It currently contains data through 2006 and primarily contains HMS interacted with in Federal waters. Permittees rarely report interactions in state waters. Small coastal sharks (SCS) are included in the collections under the auspices of the HMS exempted fishing program. A query of the database was performed to extract relevant information related to interactions with SCS on January 9, 2007, to provide additional data for the upcoming SCS stock assessment.

SCS Collected Under the EFP Program

Table 1 outlines the total number of SCS that have been collected (kept, discarded dead, or condition not otherwise specified) under the exempted fishing program between 2000 and 2006 as well as descriptive statistics on SCS total length. Some SCS are collected for the purpose of public display (379 SCS from 2000-2006) through Display Permits and EFPs, which primarily use bottom longline, rod and reel, or blocklines for collection; however, some species, such as the Atlantic Sharpnose shark, do not do well in captivity. The vast majority of SCS collected are for scientific research (2,188 SCS from 2000-2006) through EFPs, SRPs, or LOAs, which primarily use bottom longline or trawls for collections. Annual information includes descriptive statistics for 2-7 permits (range of permits per year) that reported

interactions with SCS. Total length is usually reported in inches but has been converted to centimeters for the SCS Data Workshop. No SCS were collected in 2001 and 2002. SCS were collected using rod and reel, bottom longline, trawl, and blockline gear. SCS with missing length values or estimates length values were excluded from the analyses, but included in the total counts.

Table 1. Summary of the total number and total length of small coastal sharks collected (kept, discarded dead, or condition not otherwise specified) under the exempted fishing program. - is a missing value

| Year | Species | Total Number of Animals Collected | Average Total Length (cm) | Minimum Size (cm) | Maximum Size (cm) | Standard Deviation (cm) | Median Total Length (cm) |
|------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2000 | Atlantic Sharpnose | 1 | 38.9 | 38.9 | 38.9 | - | 38.9 |
| | Bonnethead | 10 | 83.1 | 63.5 | 91.4 | 8.2 | 85.1 |
| | Blacknose | 0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Finetooth | 0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2003 | Atlantic Sharpnose | 3 | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Bonnethead | 0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Blacknose | 2 | 101.6 | 101.6 | 101.6 | 0 | 101.6 |
| | Finetooth | 0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2004 | Atlantic Sharpnose | 1568 | 59.3 | 25.9 | 172.7 | 23.4 | 48.0 |
| | Bonnethead | 236 | 65.5 | 38.1 | 125.0 | 24.9 | 52.6 |
| | Blacknose | 68 | 105.3 | 54.1 | 137.9 | 13.1 | 105.9 |
| | Finetooth | 0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2005 | Atlantic Sharpnose | 332 | 72.7 | 30.5 | 110.0 | 18.0 | 76.2 |
| | Bonnethead | 73 | 72.1 | 35.1 | 121.9 | 22.3 | 77.0 |
| | Blacknose | 77 | 100.0 | 70.6 | 126.0 | 12.7 | 101.6 |
| | Finetooth | 2 | 72.9 | 72.9 | 72.9 | 0 | 72.9 |
| 2006 | Atlantic Sharpnose | 154 | 71.3 | 30.5 | 102.1 | 18.7 | 76.2 |
| | Bonnethead | 30 | 46.6 | 34.0 | 103.9 | 21.6 | 36.1 |
| | Blacknose | 12 | 105.4 | 89.9 | 120.0 | 9.4 | 104.0 |
| | Finetooth | 0 | - | - | - | - | - |