SHARKS
(06/04 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status – *Overfished*. Although federal, commercial, and recreational harvest restrictions have been in place since 1993, and a state commercial retention prohibition since 1997, no conclusive evidence exists to suggest that stocks as a whole are recovering for these slow growing, late maturing animals.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1994-2003 – 1,765,007 lbs., $764,028

2003 Commercial Landings and Value – 1,274,163 lbs., $664,328

Average Recreational Landings 1994-2003 – 44,390 lbs. **2003 –** 33,604 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations 1994-2003 – 13 **2003 –** 4

Status of Fisheries Management Plan – A federal plan in place since 1993; there is currently no state plan.

Research and Data Needs — Nursery ground delineation and commercial fisheries observation.

Current Recreational Size/Bag Limits — The possession of any shark species, excluding; smooth dogfish, spiny dogfish, and Atlantic sharpnose shark is limited to one (1) shark per vessel per day, for vessels other than charter and head boat vessels for hire. The possession limit for charter and head boat vessels, excluding; smooth dogfish, and spiny dogfish, is one (1) shark per person per day excluding captain and crew. The sale of a charter or head boat vessel possession limit is prohibited. The catch cannot be transferred from individual anglers to the captain or crew. If no vessel is involved, the possession limit is one (1) shark per person per day. All sharks except Atlantic sharpnose, smooth dogfish, and spiny dogfish retained under the possession limit must be a minimum size of 54 inches fork length. The possession of all sharks, except for tiger, thresher, bigeye thresher, shortfin mako and hammerhead species, greater than 84 inches fork length is prohibited. Possession of the following shark species is prohibited: basking, white, sand tiger, and whale. All sharks not retained under the possession limit must be returned to the water in a manner to ensure highest likelihood of survival.

Current Commercial Limits and Seasons — Please contact the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries for details on regulations affecting the commercial harvest of sharks.

Size and Age at Maturity — variable, dependent upon species

Historical and Current Maximum Age — variable, dependent upon species

Juvenile Abundance Indices — Juvenile abundance is unknown except for a few species in certain geographic areas of the western Atlantic.

Habits and Habitats — The two most abundant sharks in North Carolina waters are the sandbar and Atlantic sharpnose. The sandbar shark is found in all warm temperate waters of the world. This is the most numerous of the large sharks of the mid-Atlantic Bight. Sandbars are known to seasonally migrate along the eastern seaboard, moving north with the warming temperatures in the summer and southward again in the fall. They are most abundant in North Carolina during the spring and fall months. Males and females remain in sexually segregated schools outside the mating season with males usually occurring in deeper water. They feed heavily on blue crabs in addition to numerous small fishes as juveniles, and fishes, skates, and crustaceans as sub-adults and adults. The Atlantic sharpnose shark inhabits nearly the entire northeastern coast of North America. It is a year-round resident in the South Atlantic. In North Carolina the Atlantic sharpnose shark is found year round in continental shelf waters and near the beaches from May-October. It aggregates into large schools

uniformly grouped by size and sex. Usually four to seven pups are born in the estuaries and shallow coastal waters during early June and are 9 to 14 inches in length. It feeds on shrimp, mollusks, and small fishes.

For more information, see DMF Species Leads page