SHARKS
(06/02 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 1992-2001 – 1,826,211 lbs., $701,868
2001 – 1,139,068 lbs., $520,162

Average Recreational Landings 1992-2001 – 42,239 lbs.
2001 – 56,285 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations 1992-2001 – 15
2001 - 16

Status of Fisheries Management Plan – No state plan. Federal plan in place since 1993.

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 (*Mustelus ca*nis), spiny dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*), and Atlantic sharpnose (*Rhizoprionodon terraenovae)* 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 (*Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*), 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 (*Galeocerdo cuvieri*), thresher (*Alopias vulpinus*), bigeye thresher (*Alopias superciliosus*), shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) and hammerhead species, (*Sphyrna* sp.), greater than 84 inches fork length is prohibited. All sharks not retained under the possession limit must be returned to the water in a manner to ensure the 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 sharks. 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