

SHARKS

(06/06 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - *Recovering* - Federal harvest restrictions have been in place since 1993, and a closure to commercial harvest in state waters occurred from 1997 to 2006. The 2002 large coastal shark stock assessment indicated that the two primary shark species in the North Carolina shark fishery (blacktip and sandbar) are not overfished and that large coastal complex as a whole has improved. However, a preliminary assessment conducted in January 2006 suggested that the sandbar shark is severely overfished and overfishing is occurring; the blacktip shark data for the Atlantic population were insufficient to make a conclusion. The large coastal complex, minus those two species, is not overfished. This assessment is currently undergoing peer review. The small coastal sharks have recently been assessed and are not overfished. Status of pelagic sharks (e.g., mako) is currently unknown but they are assumed to not be overfished.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1996-2005 – 1,403,912 lbs./\$620,829

2005 Commercial Landings and Value – 1,188,219 lbs./\$621,919 (quota managed)

Average Recreational Landings 1996-2005 – 39,674 lbs., **2005** - 18,940 lbs.

Average Number of Award Citations (150 lbs.) 1996-2005 – 14, **2005** – 7

Status of Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) – A National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Highly Migratory Species (HMS) plan has been in place since 1993. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is developing a coastal shark FMP slated for completion in 2007.

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

Current Regulations (2006) – Refer to Proclamation FF-38-2006 for details. The possession of any shark species, excluding smooth dogfish and spiny dogfish, is limited to one shark per vessel per day, including charter and head boat vessels for hire. 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 shark per person per day. All sharks, except Atlantic sharpnose, smooth dogfish, spiny dogfish, and the pelagics, retained under the possession limit must be a minimum size of 54 inches fork length (FL). Possession of the following sharks is prohibited: basking, dusky, bignose, white, sand tiger, and whale. All sharks not kept must be returned to the water in a manner to ensure the highest likelihood of survival.

Harvest Seasons – Refer to Proclamation FF-38-2006 for details. Open seasons in state waters are comparable to open seasons established by NMFS and are dependent upon quotas. It is unlawful to possess more than 4,000 lbs. dressed weight of large coastal sharks per trip. There are no harvest or size restrictions on small coastal or pelagic sharks. A corresponding carcass must be landed with all fins. Longlines in state waters can only be used to capture large coastal sharks and shall not exceed 500 yards or have more than 50 hooks. Prohibited species are listed in recreational section.

Size and Age at Maturity - Variable, dependent upon species

Historical and Current Maximum Age - Variable, dependent upon species

Juvenile Abundance Index - Unknown except for a few species in certain 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 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](#)