



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office
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MAY 13 2009

F/SER3:JL

Mr. Robert Mahood
Executive Director
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

Bob

Dear ~~Mr. Mahood~~:

I am writing to inform you that recent observer data indicate the authorized incidental take of smalltooth sawfish in the South Atlantic shrimp fishery has been exceeded. The most recent biological opinion on shrimp fishing under the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan for the South Atlantic, completed on February 25, 2005, concluded the continued authorization of the South Atlantic shrimp fishery is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of smalltooth sawfish. An incidental take statement was issued authorizing the annual incidental lethal take of up to one smalltooth sawfish. On July 26, 2008, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center's (SEFSC) Southeastern Shrimp Otter Trawl Observer Program documented a smalltooth sawfish take in a shrimp trawl in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ), approximately 35 nm east of New Smyrna Beach. The observed smalltooth sawfish was in poor condition and believed not to have survived the interaction. During a March 5-9, 2009, fishing trip in the South Atlantic EEZ, approximately 30 nm southwest of Key West, three additional smalltooth sawfish takes were observed. One of the smalltooth sawfish is thought to have died from the interaction; the other two were released alive and assumed to have survived.

On May 1, 2009, the Southeast Regional Office Sustainable Fisheries Division requested reinitiation of the Endangered Species Act section 7 consultation on the South Atlantic shrimp fishery and its effects on smalltooth sawfish. I recommend this information be shared with the Council at its June 8-14, 2009, meeting to consider whether management action is needed to reduce smalltooth sawfish bycatch in this fishery.

Sincerely,

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph. D
Regional Administrator

cc: F/SER2 – P. Steele
F/SER25 – J. McGovern
F/SER3 –D. Bernhart

File: 1514-22.d. South Atlantic Shrimp FMP

