



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/southeast>

Mr. Mel Bell, Chair
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
Charleston, South Carolina 29405

Dear Mel,

NOAA Fisheries is requesting input from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) on shark and bottlenose dolphin interactions with commercial and recreational fishing activities. As you know, fishermen are reporting more frequent interactions with these species to the South Atlantic Council, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and NOAA Fisheries.

In addition, language in the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, directs NOAA Fisheries to consult with the South Atlantic Council and other partners in undertaking:

"...a review to assess and better understand the occurrence of conflicts between dolphins and sharks and commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishing vessels in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. The review should provide: (1) a quantification, to the extent practicable within existing resources, of the degree to which dolphins and sharks interfere with commercial, charter, and recreational fishing; and (2) recommendations for non-lethal methods to deter dolphins and sharks from interfering with commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishing, in accordance with existing laws."

After reviewing available data and information, including those provided by the Councils and fishermen on this topic, we have identified the following potential focus areas for our review:

Types of Known Interactions

- Depredation
- Scavenging

Consequences of Interactions: Fisheries

- Economic losses
 - Lost/damaged gear
 - Lost/damaged catch
- Impacts to fishery populations
- Degraded fishing experience

Consequences of Interactions: Sharks and Dolphins

- Population-level impacts
- Entanglement/injury risk to animal
- Increased retaliation



Quantification of Shark and Dolphin Interactions

- Review of fishery and observer data
- Review of literature

Recommendations for Non-lethal Deterrents

- For marine mammals, NOAA Fisheries published a [proposed rule](#) that included guidelines for safely deterring marine mammals. The public comment period closed October 30, 2020. The Agency is considering public comments and preparing a final rule. Information from the rule will be included in the Congressional review. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

Research Needs

Please take time to review these areas and provide input. For example, are there other types of interactions not captured here? Have we overlooked any consequences of interactions to fisheries? Are there other data or information sources quantifying shark or dolphin interactions that you would like to provide? Are there any studies on non-lethal deterrents that we should review? Do you have suggested research needs?

We are also requesting input from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, NOAA Fisheries' Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel, and the Marine Mammal Commission. Additionally, my office is coordinating with your staff on ways to obtain input from the South Atlantic Council's Advisory Panels through an online form, and from the public during your September 2021 Council meeting.

We greatly appreciate the South Atlantic Council staff and members' time, assistance, and effort on this matter. Please provide us your input by September 30, 2021, and contact Rick DeVictor with any questions at 727-551-5720 or rick.devictor@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Strelcheck
Regional Administrator

cc: F/SEC - Clay Porch
F/SER2 - Jack McGovern
F/SER25 - Rick DeVictor
F/SER3 - David Bernhart; Laura Engleby
F/SF1 - Randy Blankinship
SAFMC - John Carmichael; Myra Brouwer