

Overview

HMS Committee

September 15, 2014

Charleston Marriott
170 Lockwood Boulevard
Charleston, SC

The Committee will discuss shark interactions with species managed by the SAFMC. The Committee will address issues under Other Business as appropriate.

A. Presentation on Recent Amendments to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (Attachments 3 - 7)

The Committee will receive a presentation from NMFS HMS on recent amendments to the HMS FMP that propose measures for managing sharks. The amendments to be included in the presentation include 5a & 5b (dusky sharks and other species), 6 (permit stacking and quotas) and 9 (smooth dogfish).

B. Shark Interactions with South Atlantic Species (Attachments 1 and 2)

The Committee will review comments received during the snapper grouper visioning port meetings regarding shark interactions with South Atlantic species. **Attachment 1** is a summary report of the visioning comments regarding shark interactions. **Attachment 2 - 6** are copies of various documents related to current shark management including Amendments 5b and 6 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan focusing on sharks that is currently under development.

Comments by Chairman Hartig:

“There are several fisheries that have specific interactions with sharks that are increasing over time. The king mackerel fishery off South Florida in spring and summer is severely impacted by primarily bull shark interactions. The greater amberjack fishery in the spring and summer off south Florida (as well as other areas) and the cobia are having interactions with bull sharks. In recent years the bull sharks have identified the hooked cobia as a food source.

There is a more general problem of more shark interactions throughout the management area. A basic problem is that HMS management restrictions have done a great job in restoring shark populations, to a point where the ecosystem is out of balance in terms of the population abundances of SAFMC managed species. There also may be some learned behavior responses at play as well with more boats chumming the sharks to access the cobia that travel with them.

When the sandbar shark experimental fishery sets in the area fishermen experience substantially less shark interactions for about a week. And then interactions begin again in earnest. Observations on bull sharks over the years indicate that these animals are very responsive to fishing pressure and will leave the area after fishing occurs for a period of time. If the SAFMC could get some type of limited opening of the shark fishery on a weekly basis during spring and summer, it would substantially limit the interactions. The goal is not a wholesale slaughter of sharks but a means for a limited harvest that allows for a viable king mackerel fishery. It could be an opening with a limited number of sharks per vessel, such as the three large coastals now allowed for an incidental permit. The current season opening is June 1st which is too late to help with the spring king mackerel run. There could also be some consideration of a split season for the southern area or a split allocation by area so both groups have access to the shark allocation when their seasonal fisheries occur.”

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

C. Other Business

The Committee will address items under Other Business as appropriate.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.