

RESOLUTION REGARDING ATLANTIC SMOOTHHOUND SHARKS FINNING POLICIES

American Elasmobranch Society
August 2013
Albuquerque, New Mexico

WHEREAS the dusky smoothhound shark (*Mustelus canis*) is subject to substantial targeted yet unregulated commercial shark fisheries along the U.S. Atlantic coast;

WHEREAS the AES and most other experts have long supported the prohibition of at-sea shark fin removal to improve enforcement of bans on shark finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea) and to facilitate collection of species-specific catch data;

WHEREAS the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) enacted in 2008 a requirement that all sharks taken in Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico fisheries be landed with fins still naturally attached;

WHEREAS the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) announced a similar "fins-attached" requirement later in 2008, but within a year created an exception for smoothhound sharks, reverting instead to a problematic fin-to-carcass weight ratio limit of 5%;

WHEREAS the Shark Conservation Act (SCA) of 2010 extended the federal Atlantic shark fins-attached mandate to all U.S. fisheries and waters with the possible exception of smoothhounds within 50 nautical miles for which an unsubstantiated 12% fin to carcass weight ratio might apply;

WHEREAS NMFS is still in the process of interpreting the rather complicated and confusing SCA text that suggests such exceptions, and is developing regulations accordingly;

WHEREAS the ASMFC in May 2013 further weakened the smoothhound shark finning ban by raising the smoothhound fin-to-carcass ratio to 12%, despite a lack of supporting scientific data;

WHEREAS NMFS has stated that requiring smoothhound shark fins to remain naturally attached through landing is necessary to facilitate enforcement and species identification, as the dressed carcass and detached fins of a smoothhound could be misidentified as a dressed carcass or detached fins of a small coastal shark, juvenile large coastal shark, or spiny dogfish.

WHEREAS loopholes in US shark finning bans can damage ongoing US efforts to promote fins-attached policies and other best practices for shark fisheries management in international fora;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the United States Congress to take all available actions to immediately eliminate and prevent exceptions to U.S. bans on removing shark fins at sea for smoothhounds or any other shark species.

RESOLUTION REGARDING ATLANTIC COWNOSE RAY CONSERVATION

American Elasmobranch Society

July, 2013

Albuquerque, New Mexico

WHEREAS the fishing industry along the East Coast, particularly around the Chesapeake Bay, has aggressively promoted targeted fishing, new markets, and eradication programs for cownose rays (*Rhinoptera bonasus*) through state governments, seafood shows, the media, and an “Eat a Ray, Save the Bay” initiative (which suggests cownose ray consumption is good for the environment);

WHEREAS cownose rays are among the least fecund marine vertebrates, with females maturing around age eight and usually producing just one pup per year after an 11 month gestation period;

WHEREAS large scale removal of a similar South American species, *Rhinoptera brasiliensis*, led rapidly to population depletion and an IUCN *Endangered* classification;

WHEREAS there have been no assessments of East coast cownose ray population status or sustainable catch levels;

WHEREAS there are no limits on cownose ray fishing and no concrete plans for managing the fishery;

WHEREAS the AES raised these concerns in 2010 and yet no assessment or management progress has been made;

WHEREAS retailers are increasingly becoming engaged in helping to ensure the sustainability of the seafood they sell,

WHEREAS the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership educates retailers at to sustainability needs for specific fisheries and has recently posted comprehensive background information on cownose ray for its FishSource public database;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Elasmobranch Society encourages [the assistance of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, relevant retailers, and fishing industry representatives in urging] the Atlantic states where cownose rays are being landed, particularly Virginia [and Maryland], to immediately impose precautionary state cownose ray catch limits, convene a panel of experts to develop management recommendations through population and/or ecological risk assessment, and initiate development of a science-based interstate conservation plan.

RESOLUTION REGARDING INTERNATIONAL ATLANTIC SHARK FINNING BANS

American Elasmobranch Society

July 2013

Albuquerque, New Mexico

WHEREAS the United States is a Party to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO);

WHEREAS Parties to NAFO and NAFO will meet in September and November, respectively, to consider proposals for international fishery measures;

WHEREAS ICCAT and NAFO banned shark finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea) in 2004 and 2005, respectively, but mandated a problematic standard for enforcing such bans (fin-to-carcass weight ratio limit);

WHEREAS the AES and most experts have long supported the prohibition of at-sea shark fin removal to improve enforcement of shark finning bans and to facilitate collection of species-specific catch data;

WHEREAS U.S. fishermen that take sharks in fisheries managed by ICCAT and NAFO are required as of 2008 to leave the fins naturally attached through landing;

WHEREAS the U.S. has been gaining support for efforts within ICCAT to end at-sea shark fin removal; and

WHEREAS the European Union, the largest supplier in the global trade of shark fins, last week published a final regulation banning the removal of shark fins on board EU vessels;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the National Marine Fisheries Service to encourage the European Union to cooperate with the US in advancing joint proposals for international bans on the at-sea removal of shark fins at the upcoming 2013 annual meetings of NAFO and ICCAT.

Resolution Regarding Media Labeling of Human-Shark Interactions American Elasmobranch Society, July 2013

Whereas the shark research community plays a primary role in leading the public discussion of shark bites on humans, including their classification, their causes, and their significance;

Whereas the International Shark Attack File, Australian Shark Attack File, and other similar organizations have promoted public education and responsible management policies regarding shark behavior and beach safety;

Whereas the use of the term “shark attack” in a sensationalizing manner by the media can reinforce misleading stereotypes of shark behavior and may undermine public support for shark conservation, especially for the white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), which is protected in many areas around the world and is classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Vulnerable with an unknown population trend;

Whereas human-shark interactions referred to as “attacks” can include cases where there is no direct contact between shark and human or where small sharks cause minimal injury;

Whereas media reporting of human-shark interactions as “attacks,” regardless of the resulting injury to the human or motivation of the shark, promotes public perceptions of dreaded outcomes linked to the film *Jaws* and other similar fictional accounts;

Whereas the public’s increased use of watercraft and ocean recreation has increased the number of non-injurious interactions with sharks, a trend that is expected to continue;

Whereas more accurate alternatives to the singular use of the term “shark attack” for categorizing shark-human interactions are available for media reports, based on, for example: a) extent of clinical injuries (see Lentz et al’s (2010) typology) and b) injurious vs. non-injurious outcomes (see Neff and Hueter’s (2013) multi-tiered typology);

Whereas the American Elasmobranch Society wishes to preserve and build on the important relationship between scientists and the media and encourage the work of the many excellent reporters, news outlets and editors who strive for journalistic accuracy;

Therefore be it resolved that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the editors of the Associated Press Stylebook, Reuters General Style Guide and similar standard references for the media to adopt a labeling typology for the multiples types of interactions and outcomes associated with shark-human interactions, thereby resisting use of the term “attack” without scientific basis and providing more accurate reporting.

References:

Lentz, A. K., Burgess, G. H., Perrin, K., Brown, J. A., Mazingo, D. W., & Lottenberg, L. (2010). Mortality and management of 96 shark attacks and development of a shark bite severity scoring system. *The American Surgeon*, 76(1), 101-106.

Neff, C and R Hueter (2013) Science, policy, and the public discourse of shark “attack”: a proposal for reclassifying human-shark interactions. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* DOI 10.1007/s13412-013-0107-2.