

RESOLUTION REGARDING ATLANTIC COMMON THRESHER SHARKS

American Elasmobranch Society
Spokane, Washington
July 2022

WHEREAS the common thresher (*Alopias vulpinus*) is economically valuable in U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries, and also inherently vulnerable, relative to many other sharks;

WHEREAS common threshers are reported from shallow waters of the western North Atlantic continental shelf in addition to offshore areas, despite being generally considered and managed as “pelagic” sharks;

WHEREAS there are no formal stock assessments, international fishing limits, or species-specific management measures for the western North Atlantic common thresher population;

WHEREAS trends of relative abundance for this population may have stabilized, current levels are well below historic values and interactions in some fisheries are increasing;

WHEREAS a 2020 study¹ found that gill nets were responsible for 50% of the U.S. Atlantic common thresher catch, 88% of which consisted of young-of-the-year, and raised concern that recent removals may represent a significant loss in recruitment for the population;

WHEREAS more restrictive U.S. limits on other Atlantic shark species, particularly the recent ban on shortfin makos, could lead to increased fishing pressure on common threshers;

WHEREAS the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) has no plans to conduct a common thresher stock assessment; and

WHEREAS the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has the information, resources, and responsibility to assess the health of the common thresher population, especially when promoting the species as sustainable seafood;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the U.S. NMFS to prioritize an assessment of the western North Atlantic common thresher population as a key step to ensuring sustainable fishing levels;

¹ Kneebone, J., H. Bowlby, J. Mello, C. McCandless, L. Natanson, B. Gervelis, G. Skomal, N. Kohler, D. Bernal. 2020. Seasonal distribution and habitat use of the common thresher shark (*Alopias vulpinus*) in the western North Atlantic Ocean inferred from fishery-dependent data. *Fishery Bulletin*. 118. 399-411. 10.7755/FB.118.4.8.