



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

**THE NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF
THE DUSKY SHARK STOCK ASSESSMENT REPORT**

The dusky shark (*Carcharhinus obscurus*) is one of 19 species for which retention is prohibited under the Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks implemented and amended in 1999 and 2003, respectively. Due to potential identification problems and catch data originating from a variety of sources, the magnitude of dusky shark catch has been difficult to ascertain. The dusky shark has not previously been individually assessed; however, low population growth rates, coupled with declines in both the catch per unit effort and size of individuals landed since the early 1990s, created concern that the dusky shark was being heavily exploited.

Using recent biological data on the growth and reproduction of dusky sharks, landing estimates from recreational and commercial fisheries, commercial bycatch estimates, four fishery-dependent and one fishery-independent relative abundance indices, a stock assessment was recently completed for the dusky shark. Results from the models used were very similar with all models showing the stock has been heavily exploited. The baseline analyses using surplus production models indicate that current depletions are over 80 percent of virgin biomass. The age-structured model provided the most optimistic results and indicated that the dusky shark population has been depleted by 62 to 80 percent of the unfished virgin biomass. The stock assessment summarizes the relevant biological data, discusses the fisheries affecting the species, and details the data and methods used to assess stock status. Some recommendations were also made regarding future avenues of research and issues to consider in future stock assessments. Comments and questions regarding the methods, data, and results of the stock assessment should be addressed to Enric Cortes of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) at (850) 234-6541.

Hard copies of the assessment can be obtained from the HMS Management Division by contacting Sarah McTee at (301) 713-2347. Electronic versions are also available on the SEFSC Panama City Laboratory's website at:
http://www.sefscpanamalab.noaa.gov/shark/pdf/Dusky_Shark_Assessment.zip.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to Atlantic shark fishery interests to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register.

for James P. Bulger
Alan Risenhoover
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

5/19/06
Date