



**NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION**  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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**NOAA Announces Measures to Rebuild Blacknose Sharks, Manage Smooth Dogfish and End Overfishing of Shortfin Mako Sharks**

NOAA's Fisheries Service today outlined new measures to rebuild the populations of blacknose sharks, help end overfishing on shortfin mako sharks, and begin management of smooth dogfish. The public may review the Final Environmental Impact Statement on the measures, which are expected to go into effect this June

"The new measures would help rebuild the population of blacknose sharks and allow sustainable fishing of other shark species in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea," said Eric Schwaab, NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "As top predators, sharks play an important role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem that supports a myriad of other species."

The new measures would place smooth dogfish under federal management for the first time, beginning in 2012. This open access fishery involves an estimated 223 vessel-operators who use gillnets to fish for smooth dogfish in waters from North Carolina to New England. Conservation and management of the species, fished for food and its fins, would allow NOAA to collect data on fishing effort and information on the shark's life history to better understand its role in a healthy ocean ecosystem.

NOAA's Fisheries Service took public comment during nine public hearings last year on its proposed shark measures and has made several changes to its initial proposal based on public input.

To rebuild the blacknose shark population—named for the dusky blotch on the tip of their noses—NOAA would create a separate annual blacknose shark quota of 19.9 metric tons dressed weight, which is a 64-percent reduction from the average landings of 55 metric tons dressed weight from 2004 to 2008. A recent stock assessment determined that the rate of fishing – both directed and incidental – is unsustainable.

Blacknose sharks, which grow to about 4 ½ feet, are fished as game by recreational anglers and for food and their fins by commercial fishermen. As a top predator, they play an important role in the ocean ecosystem, helping control various fish populations. Removing predators can result in an over-abundance of their prey species, which can change the structure of ecosystems.

The recommended annual blacknose quota is higher than NOAA's original proposal of 14.9 metric tons dressed weight. NOAA Fisheries Service would also implement a quota of 221.6 metric tons dressed weight for other small coastal sharks. This quota is equal to the average landings of finetooth, bonnethead, and Atlantic sharpnose sharks from 2004 to 2008, the primary targets for fishermen. The quota also reflects an increase from NOAA's original proposal of 56.9 metric tons dressed weight.

In addition, NOAA will continue to allow gillnet gear in the shark fishery in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. Recreational fishermen may also retain blacknose sharks. These measures represent a change from the original proposal to prohibited gillnet gear and prohibit recreational fishermen from landing blacknose sharks.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement places smooth dogfish under NOAA's Fisheries Service management beginning in 2012. This would require commercial and recreational fishermen to get an open access federal fishing permit to land smooth dogfish before the 2012 season. The measures would also require fishermen to land smooth dogfish with fins naturally attached, as is required in the Atlantic shark fishery. These measures are slated to go into effect in 2012 to allow time for NOAA Fisheries to do outreach and education on the new requirements. The annual commercial quota would be 715.5 metric tons dressed weight.

NOAA's Fisheries Service will also promote the live release of shortfin mako sharks in the commercial and recreational fisheries to help stop overfishing of this species in the Atlantic Ocean. United States fishermen catch less than 10 percent of the overall catch of shortfin mako in the North Atlantic. NOAA's Fisheries Service will continue to take action at the international level to end overfishing of this species.

For more information on this action and the federal register notice, see <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms>.

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