

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: December 12, 2018
Subject: Draft Rule – Shore-based Shark Fishing

Purpose:

Obtain approval for draft rules modifying statewide shark regulations in 68B-44, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), and general saltwater fishing regulations in 68B-2, FAC.

Summary:

Shore-based shark fishing (SBSF) is a high interest topic with passionate stakeholders advocating for diverse management actions and philosophies. Increased public interest in shark conservation combined with growing human use of coastal areas and increasing attention surrounding SBSF has led to increasing public concerns about shark mortality and disagreements about the compatibility of SBSF and other shore-based recreational activities. At the April 2018 Commission meeting, staff provided a review and discussion of various shark-related issues and the Commission directed staff to gather public input on SBSF and return with a proposal for future management of this fishery. In summer 2018, staff conducted a series of public workshops to gather feedback of potential management actions and had meetings with fishery participants, non-shark-fishing stakeholders, and local government officials.

In order to further advance the conservation of Florida shark populations and address a variety of stakeholder concerns and desires for the shark fishery, staff recommends establishing a mandatory no-cost, annual SBSF permit; prohibiting chumming from beaches; prohibiting delaying the release of prohibited sharks; requiring prohibited sharks remain in the water (when fishing from shore and vessels); and requiring the use of cutters and non-offset, non-stainless steel circle hooks (from shore and vessels; consistent with shark fishing regulations in federal waters). Staff also recommends clarifying current shark regulations through cleanup of the Sharks and Rays rule chapter and updating rule language related to recent changes to legislative shark finning penalties.

Staff Recommendation:

Approval of the proposed draft rules for 68B-44 and 68B-2, FAC, as detailed above and in the draft rule language provided. If approved, staff will return for a final public hearing at the February 2019 Commission meeting.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management