

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: February 20, 2019
Subject: Shore-based Shark Fishing – Final Public Hearing

Purpose:

Obtain final approval for rule amendments 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. At the December 2018 Commission meeting, staff presented the stakeholder feedback received and the Commission approved draft rule proposals to address management of this fishery.

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 suite of management changes for the shore-based shark fishery. The proposed final rules include a mandatory no-cost, annual SBSF permit for all shore-based shark fishermen 16 and older. (*Note:* This is an update from the proposal presented at the draft rule hearing, which would have exempted all anglers who are not required to hold a recreational saltwater license from the SBSF permit requirement.) The proposed measures also include prohibiting chumming when fishing from beaches; requiring immediate release of prohibited sharks; requiring prohibited sharks remain in the water (when fishing from shore and vessels); requiring the possession/use of appropriate cutters (from shore and vessels); and requiring the use of 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 final rules for 68B-44 and 68B-2, FAC, as detailed in the proposed rule language provided. If approved, staff will advertise the change to the proposed rules via a Notice of Change. Staff recommends making the rules effective July 1, 2019.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management