

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management  
**Date:** June 13, 2019  
**Subject:** Consent Agenda: Shortfin Mako – Draft Rule

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**Purpose:**

Revise FWC’s shark regulations to increase protections for the shortfin mako.

**Summary:**

Shortfin mako are large pelagic sharks with a wide geographic distribution throughout the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. Because shortfin mako are highly migratory, their management requires both domestic and international cooperation. In the U.S., NOAA Fisheries manages shortfin mako in federal waters and ASMFC coordinates state management of shortfin mako in Atlantic state waters. Shortfin mako are also managed internationally by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

In 2017, ICCAT conducted a new stock assessment which indicated the North Atlantic shortfin mako population is overfished and undergoing overfishing and recommended a reduction in landings internationally. Because of an international agreement, the U.S. must implement management changes based on ICCAT’s recommendation. In March 2019, NOAA Fisheries implemented final changes in federal waters to prevent overfishing, while allowing commercial and recreational fishermen to retain shortfin mako under limited circumstances. The federal regulations increased and established separate minimum size limits for male (71 inches fork length (FL)) and female (83 inches FL) shortfin mako and required the release of all live shortfin mako caught commercially, with a few exceptions for keeping dead sharks.

At their recent meeting, ASMFC adopted a requirement for states, including Florida, to increase minimum size limits for shortfin mako sharks to match the federal size limit, or to implement an equivalent conservation measure, by Jan. 1, 2020. To meet ASMFC’s requirement, staff proposes increasing the shortfin mako minimum size limit from 54 to 83 inches FL. To commercially harvest sharks in state waters, all commercial vessels must have a federal shark limited-access permit and the only allowable gear type is hook and line. Under federal regulations, commercial harvest of shortfin mako is only allowed when the shark is brought to the boat dead in the longline or gillnet fishery. Because those gear are prohibited in state waters, and because all commercial vessels must have the federal limited-access permit, no commercial harvest of shortfin mako is allowed in Florida state waters. Therefore, staff also proposes clarifying that commercial harvest of shortfin mako is prohibited in Florida state waters. Staff also recommends the proposed changes be advertised and filed for adoption to be effective January 1, 2020 without further hearing, unless requested by a member of the public.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approve the proposed draft rules for 68B-44, F.A.C. to be effective January 1, 2020.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management