

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR SHARKS

Recreational Fishery

The department is considering two changes for recreational shark regulations.

1) Remove the recreational possession limit for smoothhound sharks (smooth dogfish).

The department would like to update the recreational smoothhound rules because both the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) allow recreational anglers an unlimited number of smoothhound sharks.

2) Implement requirements for increasing a shark's chance of survival after release.

The department is considering a change to recreational shark regulations that would require sharks to be released in a manner that maximizes their survivability. Proper handling of sharks is important as there are many prohibited, undersized, or sharks not kept for consumption in this area. To increase the chance that the shark will survive after release a person should remove fishing gear as safely as possible to reduce the chance of entanglement with trailing gear. Practices like dragging the shark out of water or propping its jaws open remove the shark's gills from contact with water, cutting off their supply of oxygen and placing the animal under stress which reduces the shark's chances for survival after release. The measures being considered are complimentary to federal Highly Migratory Species shark rules and would help shark populations, such as the dusky shark, rebuild.

The following changes would apply to all recreational anglers (shore, pier, and vessel):

- Sharks that you are not going to keep (prohibited species, undersized or those that you don't want to keep) must be released in the water with a minimum of harm. This change will prevent a person from dragging a shark onto the beach. Sand can be extremely abrasive on a shark's skin, and can do damage if it gets into a shark's gills. Requiring release in the water will also protect anglers from illegal activity because dragging a shark onto the beach or into a boat for photos puts the shark into your possession and with many species it is illegal to have them in your possession.
- You may not sit on a shark. Sitting on a shark may cause internal as well as external damage and stress.
- You must use corrodible, non-offset circle hooks when targeting sharks unless you are fishing with artificial flies or artificial lures.
- Dehooking devices help to increase a shark's chance for survival. With practice, they are very efficient and safe to use as seen in the video by [Captain Mark Sampson](#). Please send us your feedback about using a dehooking device, specifically its ease of use for sharks, angler experience level with using the device, local availability, and cost.

Additional Information:

- [Amendment 5b to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan](#)
- [NOAA APEX Predator Maximum Survivability Guidelines](#)
- [NOAA Careful Catch Brochure](#)
- NOAA Highly Migratory Species [Compliance Guides](#)
- NOAA [Dusky Shark Conservation Outreach Plan](#)