

**NOAA Fisheries Announces
Small Coastal Shark Fishery in the Gulf of Mexico Closes on March 18, 2004**

Due to an overharvest of the quota, the commercial small coastal shark (SCS) fishery in the Gulf of Mexico closes at 11:30 pm local time, March 18, 2004. After this time, any small coastal shark caught in the Gulf of Mexico region by a vessel issued a commercial shark permit must be released, consistent with 50 CFR 635.28(b)(3).

Below are landings estimates in metric tons (mt) dressed weight (dw) for the Atlantic shark fisheries, as of March 8, 2004. These landings estimates are preliminary and do not include dead discards. Additionally, any unclassified landings are considered, at this time, to be large coastal sharks.

Species Group	Region	Closure date	Quota	Estimated landings	Percent of quota taken
Large Coastal Sharks- i.e., sandbar, silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, hammerheads	Gulf of Mexico	CLOSED on February 29	190.3 mt dw (419,535.4 lbs dw)	224.9 mt dw (495,710 lbs dw)	118.2
	South Atlantic	CLOSED on February 15	244.7 mt dw (539,465.6 lbs dw)	123 mt dw (271,069 lbs dw)	51.4
	North Atlantic	April 15, 2004	18.1 mt dw (39,903.3 lbs dw)	0 mt dw (0 lbs dw)	0
Small Coastal Sharks- i.e., Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, blacknose, bonnethead	Gulf of Mexico	CLOSED on March 18	11.2 mt dw (24,691.5 lbs dw)	25.5 mt dw (56,159 lbs dw)	227.4
	South Atlantic	To be determined, as necessary	233.2 mt dw (514,112.7 lbs dw)	7.25 mt dw (15,986 lbs dw)	3.1
	North Atlantic		36.5 mt dw (80,467.9 lbs dw)	0 mt dw (0 lbs dw)	0
Blue sharks	No regional quotas	To be determined, as necessary	136.5 mt dw (300,927.9 lbs dw)	17.51 mt dw (38,611 lbs dw)	4.1
Porbeagle sharks			46 mt dw (101,411.6 lbs dw)		
Pelagic sharks other than blue or porbeagle			244 mt dw (537,922.4 lbs dw)		

Approximately 30 days prior to the start of the second semi-annual 2004 fishing season, NOAA Fisheries will publish the season's length (closing date) in the Federal Register, consistent with requirements at 50 CFR 635.27(b)(1)(iv).

This FAX notice is a courtesy to Atlantic shark fishery interests to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz at 301-713-2347.

Alan Risenhoover

March 9, 2004

for John H. Dunnigan
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

Date