

Migratory Species Committee Report August 24, 2022 Dr. Thomas Frazer, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab M, No. 1**) as written and approved the minutes (**Tab M, No. 2**) of the June 2021 meeting as written.

Presentations on Migratory Species Shark Assessment and Management Strategies (Tab M, No. 4a and 4b)

Dr. Enric Cortés (Southeast Fishery Science Center [SEFSC]) provided a presentation on stock status, abundance trends, and fishery mortality trajectories for several managed shark stocks within the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf). Ms. Karyl Brewster-Geisz (Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Division [HMS]) also presented an update on recent Atlantic shark fishery management measures. Dr Cortés stated that several shark stocks have trended sustainably and others have exhibited modest increases in abundance Gulf-wide. Ms. Brewster-Geisz added that a report to Congress on dolphin and shark interactions had been finalized and would be disseminated to the Council.

The presenters were asked why the number of directed and incidental commercial shark permits had declined in recent years. Ms. Brewster-Geisz provided several possible explanations for this observation including economic feasibility, the implementation of fin bans in some states, and retention limits. The presenters were asked why the large coastal shark trip limit was increased from 45 to 55 individuals. Ms. Brewster-Geisz responded that trip limits had been adjusted to increase the probability of harvesting the large coastal shark quota.

Further discussion focused on the perceived disconnect between shark stock assessment results and fishermen testimony indicating shark populations were rapidly increasing resulting in occurrences of depredation. Dr. Cortés stated results of stock assessments lag several years and it is likely fishermen are observing increases not captured by completed assessments. Ms. Brewster-Geisz suggested that fishermen participate in studies and share information on fishing techniques that could mitigate depredation. Council staff suggested that staff from HMS participate on the Ecosystem Technical Committee to provide insights in the development of a Fishery Ecosystem Plan and SEFSC indicated staff resources would be available to that end. A Committee member inquired how NOAA Fisheries regionally managed species within the Gulf (east and west). Ms. Brewster-Geisz responded that some stocks are managed regionally to achieve desired season lengths for various portions of the Gulf. These regional allocations are informed through public comment, scoping efforts, and historical landings.

Other business

Dr. Greg Stunz provided an update on modification of 2022 North and South Atlantic Swordfish quotas. This fishery is managed with a commercial carry over provision. A rule was recently published allowing for an extra 75 metric tons of harvest available until the end of 2022. The quota will reset January 1, 2023.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.