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FISHERIES

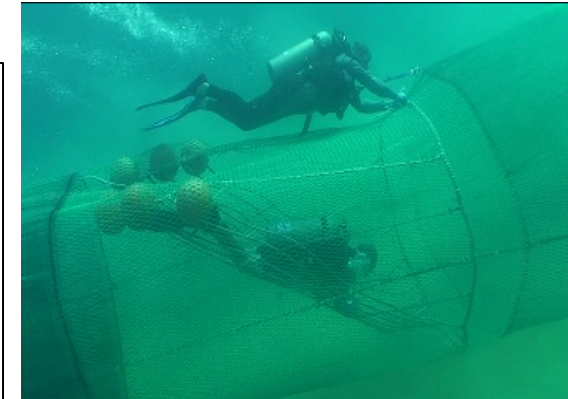
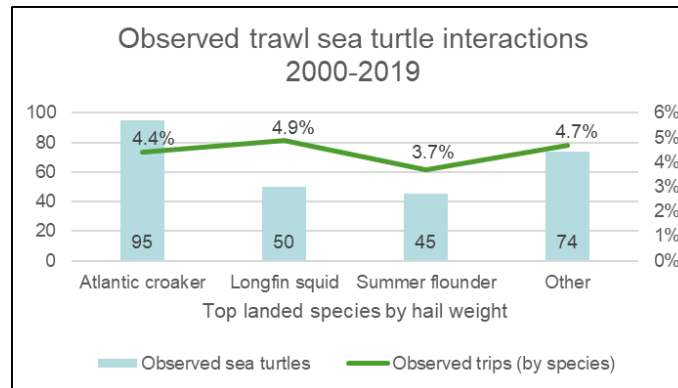
Sea Turtle Bycatch in Trawl Fisheries Public Input Received

MAFMC April meeting

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Recap - why are we doing this?

- Total trawl bycatch estimate (2014-2018) of 583 loggerheads, 46 Kemp's ridleys, 16 greens, and 26 leatherbacks
- Atlantic croaker, longfin squid, and summer flounder fisheries represent 72% of observed trawl interactions
- ESA and MSA require bycatch be minimized
- Research conducted on TED designs; final research underway
- Considering management measures and rulemaking



Measures under consideration

- 1) requiring TEDs with a large escape opening in trawls that target Atlantic croaker, weakfish, and longfin squid to reduce mortality resulting from accidental capture in these fisheries
- 2) moving the current northern boundary of the TED requirements in the summer flounder fishery to a point farther north to more comprehensively address capture in this fishery
- 3) amending the TED requirements for the summer flounder fishery to require a larger escape opening to allow the release of larger hard-shelled and leatherback sea turtles
- 4) adding an option requiring limited tow durations, if feasible and enforceable, in lieu of TEDs to provide flexibility to the fisheries

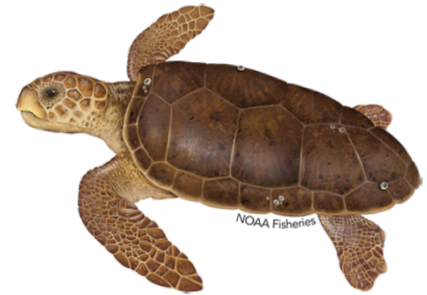
Input/Public Comment Opportunities

Fishery management meetings:

- NEFMC – December
- MAFMC – December
- ASMFC – January
- MAFMC Advisory Panel (joint longfin squid, summer flounder)

Verbal comment:

- Virtual stakeholder webinars:
 - February 16 (croaker focus)
 - March 1 (longfin squid focus)
 - March 14 (summer flounder focus)
- Call in days:
 - March 4 and March 22



Written comment: Email nmfs.gar.turtletrawl@noaa.gov. Input accepted until May 31, 2022.

What did we hear?

Participation

- Webinars: croaker (9); longfin squid (13); summer flounder (12)
 - Mostly states, industry, and interested public
 - Mostly questions
- Call in days: no responses
- Written comments (so far): 2 responses
- Most feedback from Council and AP (18 attendees) meetings
- Overall – 31 questions, 31 comments

What did we hear?

Geographic scope

- Exempt smaller vessels from the new regulations
- Exempt waters inside COLREGS line, consider inshore/offshore

Fishery definitions

- Appropriate to combine weakfish and croaker, but both limited effort now
- Consider combining summer flounder and squid
- Consider looking at gear type (e.g., flynets) rather than specific target species

Tow time issues

- Definition – consider tow time begin when winch engaged
- Concerns over lower CPUE, resulting in higher swept area which may increase bycatch and increase costs
- Need to ensure enforceability of tow time limits

What did we hear?

Economic impacts

- Direct economic loss for squid, not able to compensate by targeting another species
- Need evaluation of economic impacts of potential lost catch

Implementation

- Consider maximum limit on possession of species before requiring TEDs
- Consider using water temperature as basis for regulations
- Cable TEDs likely will be preferred by industry
- Provide options so industry can choose what works for them
- Need to continue to engage industry and obtain input on gear characteristics

What did we hear?

Information needs

Turtle bycatch

- Takes over time and by region, by levels of observer coverage and fishing effort
- Evaluate takes by trawl net characteristics
- Consider how TEDs currently working in comparison to take numbers
- Evaluate vessel strikes, marine debris and recreational fishing impacts; address other mortality sources instead of just commercial trawl fishing
- Turtle population and trend numbers

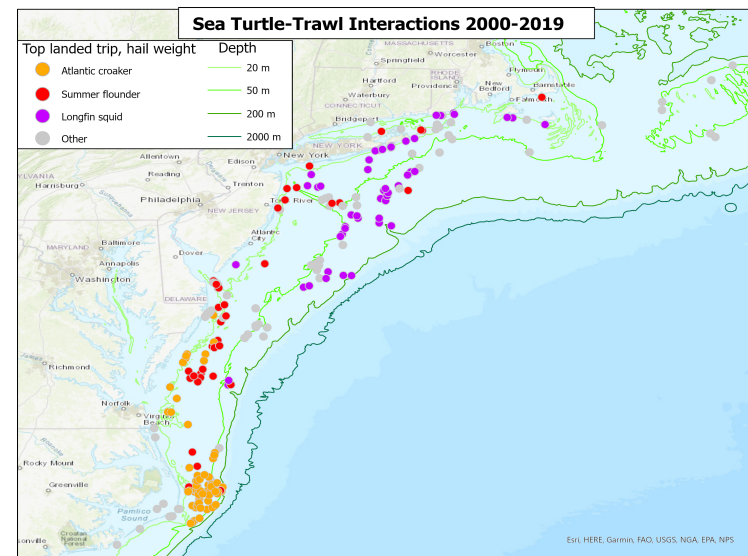
Gear

- Evaluate commercial fishing effort over last 10 years
- Tow duration data, by vessel size
- Continue to evaluate durability and clogging of TEDs

What did we hear?

Some of the questions

- Research results – sample sizes, study details
- Water depth of takes
- Location and seasonality of future regulations
- Bycatch reports and estimation methodology
- Mortality numbers and evaluation process
- Observer coverage levels
- Recovery criteria
- Turtle behavior (day vs night, in front of net)
- Use of cameras in gear



What information is still needed?

- Mitigation Measures (e.g., fishery/gear definitions)
- Operational Considerations
- Economic Considerations
- Information to include in our future bycatch reduction efforts

...ANY AND ALL INPUT STILL DESIRED!

For more information, descriptions of TED designs, research results, measures under consideration, information needed, recordings of webinars, and how to comment, visit:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sea-turtle-bycatch-reduction-trawl-fisheries>.

Next steps

MAFMC, NEFMC, ASMFC meetings; obtain comment
Written comments accepted until May 31
Comments summarized and reviewed



Research ongoing/planned
Management review



Rulemaking?

Thank You! Comments?



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