



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

April 10, 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR: Northeast Fisheries Observer Program
Observers and At-Sea Monitors

FROM: Amy Van Atten
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: Listing of Atlantic Sturgeon

Please be advised that starting on 6 April 2012 the Atlantic sturgeon will be listed as a threatened species in the Gulf of Maine and an endangered species in the New York Bight, Chesapeake Bay and Carolina regions. As such, the NMFS is currently undergoing an ESA Section 7 Consultation in order to implement conservation and mitigation practices for this species. The Consultation is planned for completion by June 2012. In the interim, it is important that the following guidelines are followed to ensure safe handling and complete data collection:

- 1) All current protocols should be followed **EXCEPT** biopsy fin clips; fin clips will **not** be collected at this time (this applies to NEFOP observers as ASMs do not collect fin clips).
- 2) Data collection on live sturgeon, including photographs, pit tag scanning should be done as quickly as possible, in a careful manner and animals should be returned to the water as soon as possible. Live animals should be treated as a priority and not left on deck. Individual lengths and weights should be visually estimated in order to reduce handling time.

Understandably captains may be concerned about this issue and have little information on how this listing affects their fishery. Additionally, they may be anxious to return animals to the water however it is important to convey that photographs and pit tag data are important observer duties and vital to the monitoring and management of this species. Observers and ASMs will be provided with updated information and protocols as soon as possible.

If you have any questions please contact Gina Shield at Gina.Shield@noaa.gov or 508-495-2139.

Thank you.

