



Human Dimensions of Rebounding Populations of Seals and White Sharks on Cape Cod, MA

Funding from Woods Hole Sea Grant supported a team from Salem State University, University of Massachusetts-Boston, Center for Coastal Studies, the Center for Animals and Public Policy at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, and Atlantic White Shark Conservancy to conduct a mixed mode (mail and Qualtrics) social science survey of voters, tourists and commercial fishers on Cape Cod about their views of seals and sharks. Representative samples of Cape Cod voters (n=547), commercial fishers (n=564), and tourists (n=699) completed surveys between June and September 2021.

An executive summary and the full report can be found online at: <http://seagrants.whoie.edu/sealshark>

Notable highlights include:

- 94% of tourists, 86% of voters, and 66% of fishers are willing to accept some inconvenience and risk in order to have oceans where marine wildlife can thrive
- 68% of voters, 65% of tourists, and 60% of commercial fishers indicate that they have control over whether or not they encounter sharks
- The ecosystem is a top management priority for 95% of tourists, 87% of voters, and 75% of commercial fishers
- 89% of tourists, 81% of voters, 77% of commercial fishers believe sharks are important to the ecosystem
- 87% of tourists, 74% of voters, and 38% of commercial fishers see seals as important to the ecosystem
- 57% of voters, 59% of commercial fishers, and 53% of tourists are aware that state-sanctioned bounty hunting resulted in the near extinction of seals on Cape Cod by 1960.
- 34% of voters, 33% of commercial fishers, and 42% of tourists know that fishing activities depleted shark populations
- 79% of commercial fishers, 65% of voters and 61% of tourists observed people coming too close to seals, and 50% of commercial fishers, 29% of voters, and 11% of tourists observed people feeding seals.