

White Sharks, Seals, and Human Interactions on Cape Cod

Cape Cod is the only known white shark aggregation site in the northwest Atlantic Ocean. During the summer and fall, sharks patrol the shallow coastal waters along the coast to feed on the abundant local gray seal population, bringing them in close proximity to popular beaches where people recreate, which creates a pressing public safety issue.



IN 2020, WHOI SEA GRANT SUPPORTED SEVERAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROJECTS TO ADDRESS THIS CHALLENGE.

Jennifer Jackman at Salem State University and her team investigated attitudes, experiences and knowledge of Cape Cod voters, tourists, and commercial fishers regarding seals, sharks and species management. Despite differences among surveyed groups, there were shared commitments to marine ecosystems, desires to coexist with marine wildlife, and attitudes that were more oriented toward marine wildlife protection than use.

A project led by Megan Winton of the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy (AWSC) focused on providing information to the public on the current and potential distribution of white sharks along the coastline. The White Shark Logbook shows the historical acoustic detection data for tagged white sharks off Cape Cod, and will incorporate models predicting the possible presence of white sharks.

A project led by Marianne Walsh of the AWSC developed a middle school curriculum unit that explored current issues related to the emerging seal and shark populations on Cape Cod. The curriculum presents scientific research to youth in an engaging, hands-on way, and fosters an understanding of how an ecosystem functions and why conserving our natural world is important.

Support protection values / Reject use values

