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Sea Turtles and the U.S. Shrimp Industry: Is Coexistence Possible?

Abstract

The goal of this presentation is to provide the listener with an overview of the conflict between sea turtle conservation efforts and the U.S. shrimp industry, and to suggest potential future research questions in this area. The idea for this presentation was inspired partly by Michael Paolisso's 2002 article, "*Blue Crabs and Controversy on the Chesapeake Bay: A Cultural Model for Understanding Watermen's Reasoning about Blue Crab Management.*" Paolisso's article explores the knowledge, beliefs, and values of the Chesapeake Bay watermen concerning blue crab management, and proposes a cultural model to help explain the viewpoint of the watermen and their resistance to proposed new harvest regulations.

Similar to the Chesapeake Bay watermen, U.S. shrimpers have actively proposed regulations requiring the use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in shrimp nets. While some may view this resistance as being motivated by greed or a desire for profits on behalf of the shrimpers, Paolisso's article suggests that resistance may be better explained by cultural models held by the shrimpers concerning the role of nature, science, and religion in regulating shrimp harvests and protecting marine wildlife. Since little information is available on the knowledge, beliefs, and values of the shrimpers concerning their role in sea turtle conservation, future research and investigation may be warranted. Management implications of this research include improved and more focused communications between sea turtle conservationists and the U.S. shrimp industry.