



Smalltooth Sawfish, Safe Handling and Release Procedures for Commercial Fisheries

The guidelines presented here describe procedures for releasing a smalltooth sawfish incidentally caught in commercial fishing gears. Sawfishes are listed as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and it is therefore illegal to harm, injure, or kill them.

General Handling and Release

- Sawfish must be released as quickly as possible and without harm
- Leave sawfish in the net or on the line until ready for release
- Keep sawfish in the water as much as possible
- Keep sawfish wet if it must be removed from the water
- Do NOT stand or sit next to the rostrum
- Tie rope around tip of saw or tail only if needed to control sawfish for safety

Line Gears (e.g., longline, rod and reel)

- Keep the sawfish, especially the gills, in the water
- Use line-cutting poles, long-handled dehookers, and/or boat hooks to remove line or gear
- DO NOT attempt to remove the hook, just cut the line as close to the hook as possible
- If line is tangled around the body or saw, untangle and remove as much of the line from around the sawfish as possible and then cut the line close to the hook

Net Gears (e.g., trawls and gillnet)

- Keep the sawfish, especially the gills, in the water as much as possible
- Roll netting away from the body of the sawfish
- Use line-cutting pole, scissors, and/or knife to cut free any net tangled around the saw by cutting the mesh along the length of the saw
- Once the mesh is cut, continue rolling the netting off the sawfish for release

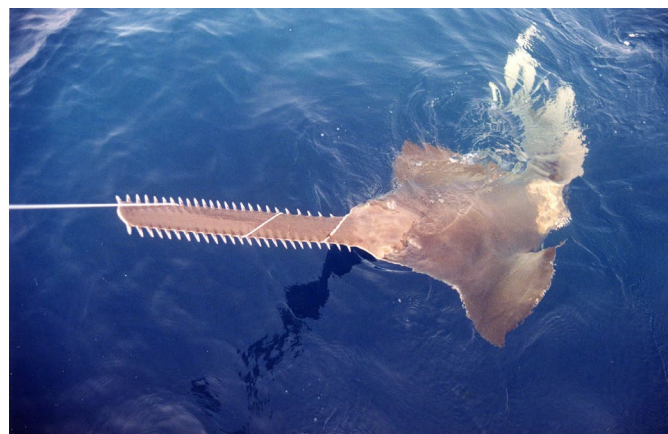
Data Recording

- Date and time
- GPS coordinates
- Photographs and videos
- Sex (check for claspers by pelvic fins)
- Tag number, if applicable
- Length (estimate saw and total length)
- Release condition (alive, dead, injured)

Reporting: 1-844-4SAWFISH (1-844-472-9347)

For more information contact:

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