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Dive Club Concerned About Overcollection

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Dive Club Concerned About Overcollection

By Carl Naylor

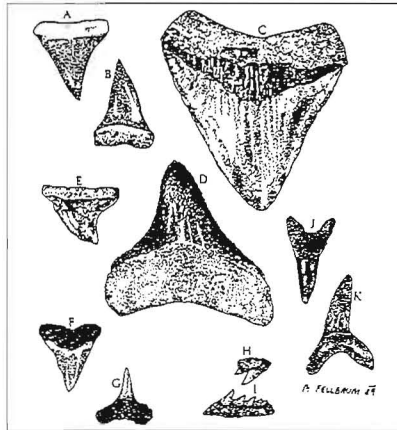
Concerned about what they see as overcollecting of fossil shark's teeth in state waters, the Hilton Head Island Dive Club invited me to address their October 2000 meeting.

After a slide presentation on SCIAA, the Underwater Archaeology Division, and the Underwater Antiquities Act, the floor was opened up to questions and comments from the 15 or so club members who attended the October 12 meeting at Island Scuba Dive & Travel dive shop.

Amber Hester, President of the club and employee at the dive shop, expressed the concern that some divers, with only Hobby Diver Licenses, are commercially collecting shark's teeth from the waters in and around Beaufort County. These divers are then selling the teeth through internet web pages and elsewhere.

While the collection of artifacts and fossils is legal under the present Underwater Antiquities Act (as long as the diver has a valid Hobby Diver License, the fossils were not collected using mechanical means, and the activity is reported to the State Museum on Fossil Report Forms) the law states that Hobby Licenses are for divers who want to conduct "recreational, small scale, non-commercial search and recovery of submerged archaeological historic property or submerged paleontological property."

Unfortunately, SCIAA has no means to monitor the sale of artifacts or fossils and no way to verify that artifacts and fossils offered for sale on the internet or elsewhere were collected from state waters. Under the law, the South Carolina State



Fossil shark teeth. (SCIAA drawings by Marcus Fellbaum)

Museum is the custodian of all submerged paleontological material and all Fossil Report Forms filed by Hobby Divers go to the State Museum.

When contacted about the dive club's concerns, Jim Knight, who monitors fossil collection by Hobby Divers for the State Museum, stated he didn't care about shark's teeth, since from a scientific point of view they had no value.

Despite this, many members of the club felt there should be more restrictions on those who sell artifacts and fossils and suggested that the law be revised to include a "commercial collectors" license for these divers. Some of the restrictions proposed included a higher fee and requiring that "commercial collectors" have business licenses and pay taxes on their revenues.

The staff of SCIAA's Underwater Division is taking preliminary steps to revise the current law and would like to hear from the diving public. If anyone would like a copy of the South Carolina Underwater Antiquities Act of 1991, or would like to comment on the law, please contact Carl Naylor at (843) 762-6105.

REMINDER NOTICES SENT TO DELINQUENT HOBBY DIVERS

By Carl Naylor

Licensed Hobby Divers who have gone several quarters without sending in their quarterly report forms will be receiving reminder notices as part of an effort by the Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program to improve diver reporting.

So far, more than 75 licensed Hobby Divers have received notices informing them that they are delinquent in their reporting.

Under the S. C. Underwater Antiquities Act of 1991, Hobby Divers are required to file their report forms no later than ten days after the end of the quarter whether collecting has occurred or not.

Divers are reminded that they must submit two report forms each quarter. Artifact Report Forms are submitted to the Charleston Office of SCIAA's Underwater Archaeology Division. Fossil Report Forms are submitted to the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia.

To assist divers in reporting their finds, both the Artifact Report Forms and the Fossil Report Forms, which are supplied to the diver with his license package, have pre-printed addresses on the back.

Divers who fail to submit reports after receiving the reminder run the risk of having their license revoked. They will also be barred from reapplying for a license in the future.

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD TRAINING COURSE

By Lynn Harris

The Underwater Archaeology Field Training Course will be held April 20-22, 2001. The classroom session will be held at the SC Department of Natural Resources, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Marine Resources Building, James Island, Charleston. The pool session will be held at the St. Andrews Recreation Center, West Ashley. The open water dive on the Cooper River will take place May 12-13, 2001 in Monks Corner. Black water river diving experience is necessary. The cost is \$150. A deposit of \$70 is required by April 6, 2001 to secure a place. Please contact Lynn Harris or Carl Naylor at the Charleston Field Office at (843) 762-6105 to apply.