

ON ALERT

Oak Island asks state to ban shark fishing



People fish from the Ocean Crest Pier in Oak Island on Tuesday. PHOTO BY MIKE SPENCER

Town's request seeks to prevent activity through July 4 holiday

By Adam Wagner
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OAK ISLAND — In the wake of a pair of Sunday shark attacks, Oak Island has asked the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries to ban shark fishing along the town's beaches through the Fourth of July weekend.

Louis Daniel, the director of the state agency, said Tuesday that Tim Holloman, Oak Island's

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Shark bite victim describes attack. **A5**

town manager, made the request during a Monday conversation. Daniel said he asked the division's attorney to investigate whether he has the authority to ban shark fishing in a given area.

While he said

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Shark fishing in North Carolina

It is legal to fish for sharks, including tiger, blacktip, spinner, lemon, bull, nurse, smooth and scalloped and great hammerhead, blacknose, finetooth, bonnethead, shortfin mako, blue, thresher, porbeage and oceanic whitetip. Catching that category is limited to one per vessel per day.

Minimum lengths include 4 feet 6 inches for blacktip, bull, lemon, nurse, spinner, tiger, blue, oceanic, whitetip, porbeage, shortfin mako and common thresher sharks. A minimum length of 6 feet 6 inches has been set for great, scalloped and smooth hammerhead sharks.

In addition, one Atlantic sharpnose and one bonnethead may be caught per person per day.

INFORMATION VIA THE N.C. DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES.

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chumming, or the practice of tossing bloody fish guts into the water to lure predator fish, could “absolutely” draw predators such as the shark or sharks that attacked a pair of teenagers Sunday afternoon in Oak Island, Daniel is skeptical that banning shark fishing in the area would prevent similar incidents.

Daniel on Tuesday questioned whether a ban on shark fishing would remove the possibility of more attacks like those that injured Kiersten and Hunter.

“I just don’t see that having the impact that they want,” Daniel said, adding that he had told the town it should ask pier owners to provide several large trash cans so fish guts could be thrown away instead of into the water.

Holloman admitted that banning shark fishing could have little to no effect, but said it is worth trying as the town works to respond to the weekend’s attacks. Other discussions, Holloman said, have included using drones to look for sharks along the coast and drafting ordinances to close the beach or ocean in the event of another shark attack.

“We are preparing for any kind of future events,” Holloman said.

Oak Island’s mayor said she supports limiting shark fishing during certain parts of the year, adding that she supports limits on chumming, particularly close to the shore.

“There’s no fish that should be attracted by the



Beachgoers, including a fisherman, enjoy the surf on Tuesday in Oak Island. STAFF PHOTO BY MIKE SPENCER/STARNEWS

Updating status of attack victims

Kiersten Yow, 12, of Archdale is in stable condition Tuesday at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill after she lost a portion of her left arm below the elbow and suffered injuries to a leg in the attack, according to a news release from UNC Healthcare. Doctors expect Kiersten will keep her leg, the release said. In the release, Kiersten’s family members praised first responders who helped her after the attack and said they were grateful.

Hunter Treschl, 16, of Colorado Springs, Colo., lost part of his left arm below the shoulder in a separate attack. Hunter was in good condition Tuesday at New Hanover Regional Medical Center, a hospital official said.

chumming method that is enough of a game fish to make it worth the chance of someone getting harmed by a fish that would be attracted by blood in the water,” Betty Wallace said.

Wallace had not yet spoken with Holloman, but said she also would consider limiting surf fishing to certain parts of Oak Island, giving families a chance to visit certain spots and visitors a chance to visit others.

Limiting fishing or

chumming would be an overreaction, said Wally Trayah, a co-captain of Oak Island Fishing Charters.

“I think the town’s in a panic over a freak accident that most likely will never happen again,” Trayah said. “They were in the water in the afternoon, there’s tons of baitfish up and down the beach and the sharks are in there feeding.”

Chumming, Trayah added, is more common in the fall than in the

summer. Trayah did admit that a pier full of fishermen with bait in the water and gutting fish could have an effect similar to chumming.

“They’re not sitting there chumming trying to catch Jews,” Trayah said. Rather than limiting fishing, Trayah added, the town should ban swimming within a certain distance of the pier.

Wallace also said Tuesday she is tired of people suggesting the town should have closed the beach, either after the attacks or in the ensuing days.

“Closing the beach is an oxymoron when considering shark bites,” she said. “The sharks aren’t on the beach.”

After Sunday’s first attack, the town sent employees up and down the coast with ATVs and megaphones to warn people out of the water. The ocean, Wallace added, is as dangerous as any natural habitat and people should be appropriately wary when entering it.

Daniel, who said he is trying to figure out what action he has the power to take, echoed Wallace.

“The problem is the amount of bait and the amount of people in the water — where the sharks live,” Daniel said, “and I don’t know how to fix that.”

The Brunswick County Sheriff’s Office’s helicopter and boat won’t patrol the coast in Oak Island on Wednesday, Holloman said, the first time since Sunday’s attacks that they won’t be present.

“We’re getting back to normal,” he said.

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Yow