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## **New York Ends Shark Fin Trade** *Gov. Cuomo Signs Legislation to Protect Sharks and Oceans*

ALBANY, N.Y. (July 26, 2013) – Fourteen major animal welfare, environmental and conservation organizations are applauding Gov. Andrew Cuomo for signing into law A.1769b/S.1711b to end New York's contribution to the dire collapse of shark populations worldwide. Taking effect on July 1, 2014, the law passed the state legislature under the leadership of Assemblymember Alan Maisel, D-Brooklyn and Sen. Mark Grisanti, R-Buffalo bans the possession, sale, trade and distribution of shark fins. Violations are punishable by up to 15 days in jail and \$100 fine for each fish.

New York – one of the largest markets for shark fins outside Asia and the largest port of entry for shark fins on the East Coast – joins seven states and all three Pacific U.S. territories in passing similar laws to provide critical protection to sharks and preserve the health of the world's ocean ecosystems.

The bipartisan state legislation is championed by Sen. Mark Grisanti, R-Buffalo, and Assemblymembers Alan Maisel, D-Brooklyn, and Linda B. Rosenthal, D-Manhattan, with the sponsorship support of 75 state legislators, U.S. Rep. Grace Meng, D-Queens, in addition to more than a dozen New York City Councilmembers through a resolution by Councilmember Margaret Chin, D-Lower Manhattan. It also has the support of every Chinese American legislator in the Empire State.

**Assemblymember Alan Maisel**, D-Brooklyn, said: "Sharks occupy the top of the marine food chain and are a critical part of the ocean ecosystem. I am honored to join with Senator Grisanti in this historic effort to prevent the possession, sale and trade in shark fins in New York. I applaud the Governor for taking the final step in this process by approving the legislation. Our success will hopefully lead to additional nationwide actions to stop the inhumane and ecologically devastating shark fin trade."

**Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal**, D-Manhattan, said: "I am so pleased that with the Governor's signature today, the possession and sale of shark fins will finally be illegal in New York State. New York will no longer be complicit in the reprehensible practice of shark finning, which has led to the demise of shark populations worldwide. I commend the tireless efforts of Assemblymember Alan Maisel and The Humane Society of the United States in getting this important work accomplished."

**Senator Mark Grisanti**, R-Buffalo, said: "I am proud to be the Senate sponsor of A.1769b/S.1711b, prohibiting the possession, sale, and trade of shark fin in New York. The decimation of the shark population is a serious concern as it has a detrimental trickle-down effect for the entire oceanic food chain. With the shark population in serious peril, and other countries and states passing legislation to protect sharks, New York should be a leader in extending protection to these magnificent animals."

**U.S. Congresswoman Grace Meng**, D-Queens, said: "I would like to congratulate Assembly Member Maisel and Senator Grisanti for taking the lead on this initiative. Shark finning is an irresponsible practice driven by the shark fin trade which kills millions of sharks every year. This law will help protect global shark populations for many years to come. It's critical for the environment and we must ensure that we do all we can to protect it."

**New York City Council Member Margaret Chin**, D-Lower Manhattan, said: "I am proud that New York is joining seven other states to ban the sale of shark fins and stand united against the cruel and inhumane practice of shark finning. I hope that New York will serve as an example not only nationally, but internationally, and that one day soon we will be celebrating the end of this industry all together."

California, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Delaware, Oregon, Washington, American Samoa, Guam and Northern Mariana Islands have enacted similar laws in recent years. The trade is spurred by the demand for shark fin soup, an expensive Chinese delicacy and status symbol commonly served at banquets and other celebrations.

#### **Statements from the organizations leading the effort to protect sharks:**

Patrick Kwan, director of grassroots organizing for **The Humane Society of the United States**, said: "New York will no longer be a haven for the cruel and unsustainable trade in shark fins. The Empire State has long taken action to protect other threatened and endangered species such as tigers and elephants, now we're taking action to protect sharks and help end the cruelty of shark finning worldwide."

Beth Lowell, campaign director for **Oceana** said: "New York said 'no' to shark fins today. The widespread support for this ban shows that sharks are worth more in the oceans than in a bowl of soup. By reducing the demand for their fins in New York, we can help to protect sharks worldwide."

Michael Skoletsky, executive director of **Shark Savers**, said: "Sharks are critically important to a healthy marine environment and divers like me have grown to appreciate sharks as being intelligent and graceful animals. Thank you, New York, for opting out of the deadly shark fin trade that is primarily responsible for devastating shark populations throughout the world."

Iris Ho, wildlife campaigns manager of **Humane Society International**, said: "Tens of millions of sharks are killed every year to meet global demand for shark fins. We applaud the humane leadership of New York Assemblymembers Alan Maisel and Linda B. Rosenthal, Sen. Mark Grisanti, Congresswoman Grace Meng, and Councilmember Margaret Chin for championing this historic effort and Gov. Andrew Cuomo for finalizing this law to end cruelty and protect shark populations and ocean ecosystems."

Peter Knights, executive director of **WildAid**, said: "New York is the last major market for shark fin in the US to close and this encourages China, which has banned shark fin from state banquets, to take further action to reduce demand for shark fin. Finally some respite for beleaguered shark populations."

Alejandra Goyenechea, international counsel for **Defenders of Wildlife**, said: "Finning is decimating the world's shark populations at an alarming rate and now New York has a chance to join the worldwide movement dedicated to halting this practice and ensuring this species' survival. This is truly an example of 'Think globally, act locally'."

John Hocevar, oceans campaign director for **Greenpeace USA**, said: "Scientists are still just beginning to discover the role sharks play in maintaining a balance in our oceans. Ending the shark fin trade is a very important step in reversing the damage we have done through this unnecessary and wasteful practice."

David VanLuven, policy director for **Environmental Advocates of New York** said: "Existing laws banning shark finning are not enough to address the worldwide harvest of shark fins - a harvest that is inhumane and destroys fragile ocean ecosystems. Governor Cuomo and state legislators have set a national standard for other states to follow."

Roger Downs, conservation director for the **Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter** said: "The important role that sharks play in maintaining marine biodiversity cannot be overstated. The catastrophic drop in shark populations across almost every species has sent shock waves through ocean ecosystems globally. Gov. Cuomo and the New York legislature should be commended for banning the sale of shark fins as a signal that New York is serious about the recovery of these keystone species."

Christopher Chin, executive director of **The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education**, said: "Sharks are vital for healthy ocean ecosystems, but their populations have declined dramatically the last few decades as a result of human greed and lack of understanding. Animals at the top of the food chain, such as sharks, have few natural predators, so they are slow to mature and have very few young. As a result, they are extremely sensitive to fishing pressures, and are slow to recover from overfishing."

Kate Dylewsky, program assistant for **Born Free USA**, said: "Born Free USA strongly believes that eliminating the market for shark fins is crucial to shark protection. While sharks face many threats in the wild, 'shark finning' is certainly the cruelest. It is time for New York to do its part in ending this horrifying practice."

Elizabeth Hogan, campaign manager for **World Society for the Protection of Animals**, said: "Shark finning is an extremely cruel and inhumane practice driven by the shark fin trade in which fishermen catch sharks, cut off their fins and throw the still-living animals back into the water, where they die slow and horrifically painful deaths. WSPA is happy to see New York state take this step to protect sharks from this needless cruelty, and plan to help other states follow their lead."

Marie Levine, executive director of the **Shark Research Institute**, said: "Much of the shark fin trade uses fins hacked off living sharks. If we found dogs and horses with their legs severed, bleeding and dying, the public outrage would be deafening. The difference is that finning takes place at sea, out of sight. Because the trade is largely unregulated and unmonitored, and finning often takes place beyond national and state jurisdiction, the most effective method to bring an end to this brutal practice is through legislation such as this."

#### **Facts:**

- The fins from up to 73 million sharks are used to make shark fin soup each year.
- Conservation, fisheries enforcement and a shark finning ban in the U.S. alone are not enough to conserve sharks. A ban on shark fin products is the most effective way to eliminate the demand for shark fins and to eradicate shark finning around the world.
- In March 2013, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species listed certain shark species on Appendix II – the first time shark species with high commercial value have been granted such protections in the 40-year history of the convention.
- Shark fin soup is often the most expensive item on restaurant menus and typically served simply as a symbol of status. It has no nutritional value and is the main driver of the multi-billion dollar international shark fin trade. The dish is highly controversial because of the manner in which shark fins are harvested outside of the U.S. and the precarious status of many shark populations.
- In 2011, President Obama signed the Shark Conservation Act to strengthen the federal law against shark finning at sea and require that sharks be landed with their fins still attached.

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