



SUSTAINABLE SHARK ALLIANCE

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Sustainable Shark Alliance Opposes Unnecessary Bill Threatening to Shut Down U.S Shark Fisheries

May 12, 2017 -- The future of sustainable U.S. shark fisheries is threatened by a renewed push by environmental groups to pass an unnecessary law that will do little to dent the illegal global shark trade, while penalizing responsible U.S. fishermen. Earlier this month, Oceana circulated a new letter with 150 signers, mostly academics and students, in favor of the Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act, which would ban the buying and selling of shark fins in the United States but do nothing to improving shark conservation.

Shark finning – a reprehensible practice universally derided by responsible fishermen whereby a shark’s fins are removed and the mortally wounded creature is released back into the ocean – has been banned in the U.S. since 1993.

“Oceana presents a false choice between a sustainable domestic shark fishery and other uses, such as tourism,” said Shaun Gehan, a lawyer for the Sustainable Shark Alliance. “University and federal studies alike show growing domestic populations.”

Today, roughly three percent of shark fins in the global market come from the United States. Removing these sustainably sourced fins will only create a void that would be filled from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing operations operating in the international market.

“Oceana and their partners are grossly misinformed and are misinforming the public,” said Bob Jones, Executive Director of the Southeastern Fisheries Association. “The U.S. shark fishery is the most sustainably run shark fishery in the world. Oceana should be promoting the responsible practices of the fishery instead of working to dismantle it.”

While not affecting illegal international shark populations, the bill will hurt U.S. shark fishermen who play by the rules. It will force fishermen to dispose of shark fins on every shark they catch, which currently account for 50% of a shark's value. Proper management can only occur when U.S. shark fisheries are allowed to collect the full value of their catch – without this revenue, shark fisheries will not be able to afford fuel costs and will cease to exist.

“Our members are struck by the intolerance of the proponents of this campaign. It is clear that they are indifferent to the potential loss of income. I guess the livelihoods of fishing families are insignificant to the folks who support Oceana's agenda,” said Greg DiDomenico, Executive Director of the Garden State Seafood Association.

Respected shark scientists have come out in opposition to the legislation, including Dr. Robert E. Hueter. Dr. Hueter is the Director of the Center for Shark Research at Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota Florida, and has over 40 years of experience in shark research.

“[The Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act] is not about ending finning, therefore, but instead will cause the demise of a legal domestic industry that is showing the rest of the world how to utilize sharks in a responsible, sustainable way,” wrote Dr. Hueter in a letter to Congress. “This bill will do nothing to effectively combat the practice of finning on the high seas and in other countries, where the real problem lies, and it will not significantly reduce mortality of the sharks killed in global fisheries every year.”

The Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act paves the way for illegal fishing operations to thrive while effectively shutting down a U.S. industry that has adhered to stringent regulations for decades. Instead of attempting to send a symbolic message, it's far more important that the U.S. continues to support a shark fishing operation that exemplifies sustainable practices for the world to follow.

About the Sustainable Shark Alliance

The Sustainable Shark Alliance (SSA) is a coalition of shark fishermen and seafood dealers that advocate for sustainable U.S. shark fisheries and support healthy shark populations. The SSA stands behind U.S. shark fisheries as global leaders in successful shark management and conservation. Its supporters in the U.S. shark fishery include:

Safe Harbour Seafood, Bon Secour, AL
Bryant Products, Bayou La Batre, AL
Madeira Beach Seafood, Madeira Beach, FL
Save On Seafood, St. Petersburg, FL
Seafood Atlantic, Port Canaveral, FL
Greg Abrams Seafood, Panama City, FL

AP Bell Seafood, Madeira Beach, FL
Fishermen's Ice & Bait, Madeira Beach, FL
Kings Seafood, Port Orange, FL
Wild Ocean Market Seafood, Titusville, FL
Omni Shrimp Company, Madeira Beach, FL
Day Boat Seafood, Lake Park, FL
Phoenix Fisheries, Southport, FL
DSF, Inc., Daytona Bch., FL
Hull's Seafood Markets, Inc., Ormond Beach, FL
Phillips Seafood, Townsend, GA
Ocean Fresh Seafood, New Orleans, LA
Venice Fish and Shrimp, Venice, LA
Southern Seafood Connect'n, Crisfield, MD
Crystal Coast Fisheries, Morehead City, NC
Avon Seafood, Avon, NC
Wanchese Fisheries, Wanchese, NC
O'Neal's Sea Harvest, Wanchese, NC
Jeffery's Seafood, Hatteras, NC
B & J Seafood, New Bern, NC
Willie R. Etheridge Seafood, Wanchese, NC
Crystal Coast Dayboat Seafood, Morehead City, NC
Viking Village Seafood, Barnegat Light, NJ
Carolina Seafood, Rutledge Leeland, SC