

## **RESOLUTION REGARDING CITES LISTING FOR MOBULA RAYS**

American Elasmobranch Society  
July 2016  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**WHEREAS** intrinsic rates of increase for rays of the genus *Mobula* are among the lowest for all elasmobranchs, making these species exceptionally vulnerable to overexploitation;

**WHEREAS** mobula rays are at particular risk from largely unregulated, international trade in their gill plates, which are used in a Chinese tonic;

**WHEREAS** listing under Appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) can promote conservation of internationally traded species through controls aimed at documenting that exports are sourced from legal, sustainable fishing operations;

**WHEREAS** the United States (U.S.) is co-sponsoring Fiji's proposal to list mobula rays under CITES Appendix II at the next Conference of Parties (CoP) in September 2016;

**WHEREAS** manta rays (*Manta* spp.) face similar threats and were listed on CITES Appendix II in 2013; and

**WHEREAS** CITES Appendix II listing for mobula rays should help to facilitate implementation of current CITES obligations for manta rays.

***THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED*** that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the governments of Canada and Mexico to support the U.S., Fiji, and other countries in efforts to secure and implement a CITES Appendix II listing for *Mobula* rays.

## **RESOLUTION REGARDING ESTABLISHMENT OF HMS RESEARCH FUND**

American Elasmobranch Society  
July 2016  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**WHEREAS** Highly Migratory Species (HMS) comprise the species of sharks, tunas, billfish and swordfish under the jurisdiction of NOAA/NMFS in the U.S.;

**WHEREAS** many HMS species including sharks are threatened by overfishing and environmental problems and are in need of improved, science-based management;

**WHEREAS** HMS fisheries in the U.S. portions of the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico inject hundreds of millions of dollars into coastal communities;

**WHEREAS** NOAA/NMFS in 2014 prioritized research agendas for Atlantic HMS in its “Final Atlantic HMS Management-Based Research Needs and Priorities” plan;

**WHEREAS** progress has been slow to implement research responding to these Atlantic HMS needs, primarily because of budgetary constraints;

**WHEREAS** NOAA/NMFS extramural grants programs for fisheries research, such as Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K), Cooperative Research Program (CRP), Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP), and Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN), are inadequately funded to handle all of the nation’s fisheries research needs, particularly for HMS;

**WHEREAS** a coalition of HMS research scientists has requested the U.S. Congress to provide for a \$4M addition to the NOAA/NMFS/Fisheries Science and Management FY17 budget to address this shortfall in research funding for HMS;

***THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED*** that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the United States Congress to establish the Highly Migratory Species Fisheries Research Program with a \$4M addition to the NOAA/NMFS FY17 budget exclusively to fund competitive, extramural research projects that address the needs for management and conservation of Atlantic and Gulf HMS fishes.

**RESOLUTION REGARDING THE  
INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS**

American Elasmobranch Society  
July 2016  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**WHEREAS** the United States (U.S.), Canada, and Mexico are Parties to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT);

**WHEREAS** prohibiting at-sea removal of shark fins is widely recognized as the best practice for enforcing shark finning bans and can also facilitate the collection of much-needed, species-specific shark catch data;

**WHEREAS** scientists convened by ICCAT have advised that, in order to ensure sustainability, catches of Atlantic shortfin mako and blue sharks should not increase; and

**WHEREAS** various government proposals to establish such catch limits and ban at-sea shark fin removal in ICCAT fisheries are gaining support, but have yet to be adopted;

***THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED*** that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the governments of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to work to secure at the annual ICCAT meeting in November a ban on at-sea shark fin removal, and international limits to prevent shortfin mako and blue shark catches from increasing, in line with scientific advice.

## **RESOLUTION REGARDING THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES ORGANIZATION**

American Elasmobranch Society  
July 2016  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**WHEREAS** the United States (U.S.) and Canada are Parties to the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO);

**WHEREAS** the U.S. and the European Union have proposed that NAFO prohibit at-sea removal of shark fins, as this method is widely recognized as the best practice for enforcing shark finning bans;

**WHEREAS** the Northwest Atlantic population of thorny skate (*Amblyraja radiata*) is a straddling stock classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Vulnerable off the east coast of Canada and Critically Endangered off New England;

**WHEREAS** the NAFO total allowable catch (TAC) for skates has remained well above the level advised by the NAFO Scientific Council since the TAC was established a decade ago;

**WHEREAS** thorny skates dominate the skate fisheries managed under NAFO;

**WHEREAS** the NAFO Scientific Council will provide advice on NAFO skate limits, based on an updated stock assessment of thorny skates, for consideration by NAFO Parties at the 2016 NAFO annual meeting in September.

***THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED*** that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the U.S. and Canadian governments to work to secure at the annual NAFO meeting in September a ban on at-sea shark fin removal and a skate TAC that does not exceed the catch level advised by the NAFO Scientific Council.

## **RESOLUTION REGARDING U.S. SMALLTOOTH SAWFISH**

American Elasmobranch Society  
July 2016  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**WHEREAS** the smalltooth sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*) is classified as *Critically Endangered* under the IUCN *Red List of Threatened Species*;

**WHEREAS** the U.S. population of smalltooth sawfish was estimated in the late 1990s to have declined to less than 5% of presumed virgin levels;

**WHEREAS** the U.S. smalltooth sawfish distinct population segment was listed as *Endangered* under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2003, resulting in the development of a comprehensive recovery plan;

**WHEREAS** scientific data suggest that smalltooth sawfish abundance in core areas of Florida may now be increasing;

**WHEREAS** mishandling of sawfish by anglers (dragging animals to shore or along beach, lifting them out of the water for photos, etc.) is regularly documented;

**WHEREAS** the fishing activity most lethal to U.S. sawfish (shrimp trawling off west Florida) is subject to exceptionally low levels of observer coverage (less than 2%);

**WHEREAS** funding from the U.S. Congress for implementation of the sawfish recovery plan has been declining in recent years, thereby hampering implementation;

**WHEREAS** programs suffering from such budget cuts include outreach and education of fishermen with respect to proper handling, release, and reporting, which are vital as the population and thus fishery interactions increase;

**WHEREAS** the U.S. Smalltooth Sawfish Recovery Plan, if properly implemented, can be a vital model for initiatives to conserve endangered sawfish around the world.

***THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED*** that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the United States Congress to significantly increase funding for implementation of the Smalltooth Sawfish Recovery Plan, as well as for observer coverage for shrimp fisheries off the west coast of Florida.