

RESOLUTION REGARDING NORTH ATLANTIC SHORTFIN MAKO SHARKS

American Elasmobranch Society
July 2020

WHEREAS the U.S. and Mexico are Parties to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), ranking 4th and 10th, respectively, for landings of North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus*);

WHEREAS shortfin makos have ranked third among 20 pelagic elasmobranch stocks in terms of vulnerability to Atlantic longline fisheries in Ecological Risk Assessments conducted for ICCAT;

WHEREAS ICCAT shark scientists in 2019 found that the overfished North Atlantic shortfin population is subject to continued overfishing, will decline for at least the next 15 years, needs substantial reductions in fishing mortality to begin rebuilding, and is projected to be unable to recover by 2070 under ICCAT's current (2017) management measure;

WHEREAS the ICCAT scientists found that an annual total catch of zero (including discards) has a 53% probability of rebuilding the population by 2045, and recommend that ICCAT prohibit retention of North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks, as it has for other shark species;

WHEREAS ICCAT scientists noted that shortfin mako post-release survival can reach 75%, indicating a prohibition can be particularly effective at achieving significant reductions in mortality;

WHEREAS Canada recently banned retention of shortfin makos in domestic Atlantic fisheries and proposed the same action under ICCAT, in concert with fifteen other Parties, in 2019;

WHEREAS Mexico has yet to limit mako catches or publicly express a position on ICCAT proposals for shortfin mako limits; and

WHEREAS U.S. opposition was a key factor in ICCAT's failure to reach consensus on the 2019 science-based shortfin mako proposal, leaving the declining, vulnerable North Atlantic population without any international catch limits.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the U.S. and Mexican governments to act on clear and urgent scientific advice for North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks by prohibiting retention domestically and supporting the same action under ICCAT as part of 2020 virtual negotiations.

RESOLUTION REGARDING WESTERN ATLANTIC SAWFISHES

American Elasmobranch Society
July 2020

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

WHEREAS the U.S. has a comprehensive smalltooth sawfish recovery plan, based on cutting edge research and protection programs, and has been deemed a “lifeboat” for the species by the IUCN Shark Specialist Group;

WHEREAS the U.S. is a member of the Cartagena Convention Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA Protocol) and the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC), and officials from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are active participants in these bodies’ elasmobranch working groups;

WHEREAS smalltooth and largetooth sawfish have been listed under Annex II of the SPA Protocol (in 2017 and 2019, respectively), which obligates Parties to strictly protect these species;

WHEREAS in 2019 WECAFC adopted a Resolution aimed at prohibiting retention of several elasmobranch species of conservation concern, including both of the region’s sawfishes;

WHEREAS the IUCN Shark Specialist Group has identified several SPAW/WECAFC members as priorities for sawfish research and/or protection: Bahamas, Cuba, Colombia, Panama, and Honduras;

WHEREAS the Bahamas and Cuba have not yet adopted explicit, species-specific bans on killing sawfish or requirements for their safe release;

WHEREAS Colombia, Panama, and Honduras have no sawfish-specific legal protections; and

WHEREAS the U.S. has significant expertise, influence, and resources that can help other countries study and protect sawfishes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the American Elasmobranch Society urges the U.S. NOAA to prioritize sawfish protection within its SPAW Protocol and WECAFC workplan, with the aim of facilitating coordinated sawfish research and protection in key Western Atlantic range states.