

Surfers Call on Congress to Pass the Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act

As surfers, we are committed to ensuring the oceans we swim in maintain a balanced ecosystem as well as their natural beauty. This includes supporting practices that help protect marine habitats as well as banning those that contribute to the endangerment of the ocean's inhabitants.

One practice stands above others in terms of wastefulness and cruelty — shark finning, which is fueled by the demand for shark fins. This process involves cutting the fins off of a shark and discarding its body at sea, where it dies a slow death from drowning, bleeding out or even being eaten alive by other fish.

Sharks have important ecological value, playing critical roles in structuring ocean food webs. This means that declines in shark populations can create a domino effect of unintended consequences, including the possibility of damaging other marine animal populations.

The demand for shark fins is primarily driven by the market for shark fin soup, which is considered a luxury item in some Asian cuisines. In fact, it is estimated that fins from as many as 73 million sharks end up in the global shark fin trade every year.

This is especially troubling because many shark populations are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. These species tend to have long lifespans, mature slowly and produce relatively few young, making them slow to recover from unsustainable fishing. Some shark populations around the world have declined by more than 90 percent, with between 63 and 273 million sharks killed every year.

While shark finning is banned in U.S. waters, it is still legal to buy, sell and trade shark fins throughout most of the country. By allowing the trade of shark fins within our borders, the U.S. continues to contribute to this global problem.

Eleven states and three U.S. territories have already banned the sale or trade of most shark fins. The Chinese government has stopped serving shark fin soup at official government banquets. Private companies are also refusing to ship or sell shark fin products, including Amazon, GrubHub, many hotels and major airlines, Disney and multiple shipping companies.

Even surfers who have faced risky encounters with sharks while enjoying their craft support protecting these important apex predators. Hawaiian surfer Mike Coots suffered injuries from a tiger shark encounter when he was 18-years-old, but soon after became a shark conservation advocate. He promoted legislation banning the possession of shark fins in Hawaii, and in 2010, the state became the first to pass such a law.

The fact is that we should be scared for sharks, not of them.

A national ban on shark fins would reinforce the status of the United States as a leader in shark conservation, setting an example for the rest of the world.

A poll released last year by conservation group Oceana revealed that eight in 10 Americans (81 percent) support a ban on the trade of shark fins in the United States. We agree — there's no place for shark fins in the United States. It's time to make it official.

Sincerely,

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Grain Surfboards
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Maui and Sons
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Ocean Pulse
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Paskowitz Surf Camp
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Sea, Surf & Fun
Half Moon Bay, CA

Surf City Surf School
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Surf Style Retail Management Inc.
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BLISSS Magazine
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University of California Santa Cruz Surf Club
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The Inertia
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WRV Surf Camp
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WSSM Womens Surf Style Magazine
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