

September 17, 2019

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Chairman of Natural Resources Committee
1511 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Bishop
Ranking Member of Natural Resources Committee
123 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop:

We are anglers and fishing professionals writing today to ask you to mark up the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act (H.R.737) in the House Natural Resources Committee as soon as possible. This bill would enact a federal ban on the buying and selling of shark fins in the United States. This legislation is vital to shark conservation and the benefits that conservation bestows on our communities, including recreational shark fishing, shark diving tourism, and the values of the ecosystem services provided by apex predators.

The demand for shark fins threatens shark populations worldwide. Fins from as many as 73 million sharks end up in the global market each year, and over one-third of identified shark species in the Hong Kong fin trade, the historic center of the global trade, are threatened with extinction. Although Congress passed a ban on shark finning, we continue to import fins from countries that do not have any regulations against finning. And while 12 states have passed state bans on possession and transport, fins continue to be imported and exported into and out of some of those states. By participating in this market, the United States is aiding and abetting in the population reductions of these vitally important animals.

But removing the United States from this devastating trade would send a message to the rest of the world: The United States will not stand by while many shark populations continue to decline, largely due to the demand for their fins. We would accelerate the global momentum against the shark-finning industry. Thankfully, that momentum is real and accelerating. For example, more than half of international airlines have banned carrying shark fins. And 17 of the 19 biggest shipping lines, measured by container capacity, have banned carrying shark fins. But time is running out for many shark species.

The United States boasts the world's largest sportfishing community in the world. The sportfishing industry and the nation's 11 million saltwater anglers are proud conservationists. Our commitment to conservation plays out every day in the waters throughout the country, both in the ways we go about pursuing fish and in the ethical ways we harvest or release them. The demand for shark fins flies in the face of the sportfishing community's conservation ethos, and threatens to undermine the fisheries

and ecosystems that sustain our sport.

The 11 million Americans who go saltwater fishing every year spend roughly \$27 billion in pursuit of fun and fish. That spending fuels 450,000 jobs in the United States. Clearly, saltwater sportfishing is big business. Sustaining this level of saltwater sportfishing and the commerce it pumps into our coastal communities requires effective, science-based fishery management and conservation of our resources. Shark fins have no place in this country and degrades the quality of opportunities required for saltwater sportfishing to continue to thrive.

In addition to the direct and ecosystem benefits provided by sharks to recreational fishing, direct expenditures from shark encounters in Florida alone contributed \$221 million to the economy in 2016. This represents a reoccurring benefit to the economy—as long as sharks are swimming in the ocean. In contrast, the value of shark fin exports from the entire United States amounted to a little more than \$1 million in 2015.

Please support any efforts to ban the buying and selling of shark fins in the United States, which will improve upon current enforcement capabilities, reinforce the United States' status as a leader in shark conservation, and bring the world closer to ending the devastating trade in shark fins. To this end, please mark up the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act (H.R. 737) in your committee as soon as possible to allow this legislation to be considered on the House floor.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned:

Nelis Gonzalez – West Palm Beach, FL
Rebecca Prada – West Palm Beach, FL
Fernando Prada – West Palm Beach, FL
Elena Margot Prada – West Palm Beach, FL
Noel Gonzalez – West Palm Beach, FL
Diane Umbarila – West Palm Beach, FL
Magaly Fuentes – Lake Clarke Shores, FL
Vanessa Tonnessen – Atlantis, FL
Kjell Tonnessen – Atlantis, FL
Johnny Diamond – West Palm Beach, FL
Danielle Gonzalez – West Palm Beach, FL
William Wasko – Boynton Beach, FL
Brandon Burnett – West Palm Beach, FL
Hannah Zweigbahn – West Palm Beach, FL
John Schneider – Lake Worth, FL
Liza Gonzalez – Jupiter, FL
Bill Nix – West Palm Beach, FL

Jennifer Colleran – Lake Worth, FL
Magaly Cano – West Palm Beach, FL
Anthony Breen – Stuart, FL
Luissa Alba – West Palm Beach, FL
Herbert MacDonald – West Palm Beach, FL
Michael Ivancevic – Jupiter, FL
Tanya Burnett – West Palm Beach, FL
Sara Baylor – West Palm Beach, FL
James Harle – Islamorada, FL
John Panozzo – Palm Springs, FL
Denise McWeeney – Jupiter, FL
William Ahrens – Fort Lauderdale, FL
Teresa Sepko – Jensen Beach, FL
William Gibson – Jensen Beach, FL
Walt Stearns – Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Zsolt Takacs – Green Cove Springs, FL
Rodney Smith – Satellite, FL
Mike Connor – Jensen Beach, FL
Marilyn Fuentes – West Palm Beach, FL
Emily Crandall – Palm Harbor, FL
Lilian Rivera – Boynton Beach, FL
Margarita Hernandez – West Palm Beach, FL
Josh Menendez – Tampa, FL
Bree Roberts – Jensen Beach, FL
Heather Lamantia – Jupiter, FL
Carter Lamantia – Jupiter, FL
Luke Lamantia – Jupiter, FL
Steve Friedman – Islamorada, FL
Ben Roberts – Jensen Beach, FL
Jessica Roberts – Jensen Beach, FL
Walt Stearns – North Palm Beach, FL
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Matt Cariseo – Loxahatchee, FL
Rick Abbott – Tallahassee, FL
Matt Ayala – Fort Myers, FL
Joe Coogan – Merritt Island, FL
Peter Cross – Lantana, FL
Steve Fitzpatrick – Boynton Beach, FL
Ryan Floyd – Port St. Lucie, FL
Roger Catchpole – Jupiter, FL
Will Rider – Stuart, FL
Tracey Rider – Stuart, FL



**AMERICAN
SALTWATER
GUIDES
ASSOCIATION**

Promoting Sustainable
Business Through
Marine Conservation

American Saltwater Guides Association

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Capt John McMurray,
President

Tony Friedrich,
VP/Policy Director

The American Saltwater Guides Association (ASGA) represents guides, recreational fishermen, and the businesses they support. We have hundreds of members from North Carolina to Maine and advocate for a resource first approach to fisheries management. That is, if the resource is managed as a complete ecosystem, we all benefit. We believe in "Better Fishing Through Conservation" and "If you take care of the fish: the fish will take care of you."

ASGA is in full support of The Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act, H.R. 737 and encourages the House Natural Resources Committee to bring it up for a markup. While the practice of shark finning is banned in our country, this legislation would strengthen the current prohibition on shark finning by banning possession and trade of fins. This would remove the United States from the international market for shark fins and go a long way in protecting the balance of our marine ecosystems.

Saltwater fishing guides consistently encounter sharks. Sometimes, we even lose fish to them. But we recognize that it is their home and we are just visitors. We also understand that a healthy shark population equals a healthy ecosystem - they help regulate the oceans we rely on for our livelihoods. That's better for everyone.

Sharks are vital to our marine resources, . but they are in trouble. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature lists 141 species of shark as "endangered" or "critically endangered" "near threatened" or "vulnerable" on its "Red List," and 209 more are listed as "data deficient". The shark fin trade is contributing to the decline of shark populations around the world, and now is the time to act.

We need to do everything we can to restore equilibrium to our marine environment, and ending the trade in shark fins will help us achieve that goal. ASGA supports sustainable fishing methods as well as abundant fish populations. We must do the right thing for our oceans so future generations have the same or better opportunities to participate in our fishing heritage. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation. We look forward to seeing it marked up in committee soon.

John McMurray
ASGA



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