

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 26, 2021

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

We are writing to urge the U.S. delegation to the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to endorse and fully support a retention ban on shortfin mako sharks at the upcoming meeting this week.


It is particularly unfortunate that, for four years, the U.S. has been a major obstacle in shortfin mako protection. Today, the U.S. remains the *only* ICCAT member Party to support allowances for killing large, reproductive makos that make it to the boat alive. This senseless practice jeopardizes mako populations, which have declined 50 to 75 percent, and are listed as globally endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. According to NOAA, the Atlantic shortfin mako is overfished, with population levels well below target levels. To sustainably manage mako populations, the U.S. must align itself with protections supported by the many ICCAT Parties and advisements from ICCAT scientists.

Shortfin makos are among the world's most valuable and vulnerable oceanic sharks. The North Atlantic population is depleted due to decades of overexploitation by commercial and recreational fisheries. Analyses by ICCAT scientists, including representatives of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), demonstrate that existing restrictions are grossly insufficient for reversing serious population decline. Rebuilding is already likely to take several decades, even with immediate action. The U.S. has long been considered a global leader in shark fisheries management. Backsliding in this arena over recent years damages the U.S.'s credibility in international conservation and is proving disastrous for Atlantic shortfin makos, as well as the ecosystems and businesses they support.

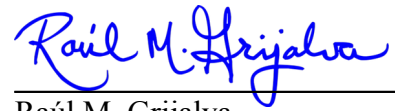
Early in his Administration, President Biden made clear that the decisions made by his agencies would be based on science. The current position held by NMFS directly contradicts and defies this policy. Given the perilous status of mako populations and the overdue need for an ICCAT mako conservation agreement, we urge the Commerce Department to support the scientifically-driven recommendation for shortfin makos: an immediate retention ban for the North Atlantic population, without exception.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress
Chair, Committee on Natural
Resources



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress
Chair, Subcommittee on
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife



Darren Soto
Member of Congress

