

---

---

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMMERCE**

**NEWS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

---

---

NATIONAL  
OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC  
ADMINISTRATION

Contact: Scott Smullen  
(202) 494-6515  
Susan Buchanan  
(301) 257-4515

NOAA04-110  
**EMBARGOED UNTIL 11 a.m.**  
November 15, 2004

**UNITED STATES ASKS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO ADOPT COLLABORATIVE PLAN  
TO MANAGE SHARKS**

*NOAA Administrator Outlines Proposal that Mirrors U.S. Fishing Rules*

**New Orleans** — The United States has asked the international community to start managing shark populations in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Gulf of Mexico. The proposal asks other shark fishing nations to adopt procedures like those followed by U.S. fishermen and resource managers. NOAA Administrator Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr. detailed the U.S. proposal on shark management to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas today during a news conference at the ICCAT meeting in New Orleans. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

More comprehensive catch data is necessary to support development of effective management for Atlantic sharks throughout their migratory range, and this can only be accomplished at the international level.

“We are serious about managing our fisheries in a sustainable way. The United States is inviting other countries to join us in improving the outlook for Atlantic sharks,” said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “Healthier shark populations would bolster economic opportunities for all shark harvesting nations, and we believe this action will help get us there.”

The United States has managed domestic Atlantic shark fisheries since 1993. However, populations of many species have continued to decline over the past decade despite a highly regulated U.S. fishery. Domestic shark fisheries are subject to a commercial limited entry program, low annual quotas, recreational catch limits and a prohibition on shark finning – the practice of cutting the fins off the shark and disposing of the carcass. Since sharks are migratory, fishermen from many nations fish on the same stock even though data collection and management efforts are not consistent between nations.

“While we are putting forth our best efforts in the United States to rebuild Atlantic sharks with comprehensive regulations for our domestic fleet, we can only achieve long-term healthy fisheries with cooperation from other shark fishing nations,” Lautenbacher said. “We are asking the international community to join us in our effort to support sustainable shark populations.”

“This proposal is key to moving ICCAT closer to an ecosystem management approach for Atlantic highly migratory fisheries,” said William Hogarth, director of NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. government commissioner to ICCAT. “It would result in a win-win situation for sharks, fishermen and the economies of all fishing nations that depend on healthy shark populations.”

As the regional fishery management organization with responsibility for migratory fisheries in the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean and Gulf of Mexico, the United States believes ICCAT is best equipped to take the lead in developing binding commitments for international shark management.

**The U.S. shark proposal includes the following binding measures that would apply in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Gulf of Mexico:**

- A requirement for nations to report scientific data from all fisheries that catch sharks;
- A ban on shark finning;
- A requirement for nations to limit the number of vessels that target sharks;
- A request for vessels to attempt the release of live sharks that are encountered as bycatch;
- A call for scientific research to identify shark nursery areas and expand knowledge of these species’ basic life history; and
- A call for nations to develop fishing gear that would reduce bycatch and improve post-release survivability of sharks.

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas is made up of 39 members, representing 63 countries including the United States. Established in 1969, the commission facilitates international cooperation in research and conservation of fish stocks that are shared by many nations, such as tunas, swordfish, marlins, sailfish and spearfish. The commission’s involvement in shark management has been limited to date.

ICCAT will deliberate on this and other proposals during the week and a decision is expected by the conclusion of the meeting on Sunday, November 21, 2004.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to providing and preserving the nation’s living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation’s coastal and marine resources.

###

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

ICCAT: <http://www.iccat.es>