

PRESS RELEASE



Stronger Shark Finning Ban Endorsed by European Parliament

Strasbourg, France. November 22, 2012. Conservation groups are celebrating today's European Parliament vote to close loopholes in the European Union ban on shark finning (slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea), the culmination of six years of campaigning and debate. Members of the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of the European Commission's proposal to impose the best practice for finning ban enforcement: a prohibition on removing shark fins at sea. The measure faced formidable opposition from representatives of Spain and Portugal, Europe's leaders in catch of oceanic sharks.

"Parliament's overwhelming support for strengthening the EU finning ban represents a significant victory for shark conservation in the EU and beyond," said Ali Hood, Shark Trust Director of Conservation. "Because of the EU's influence at international fisheries bodies, this action holds great promise for combating this wasteful practice on a global scale."

The EU banned finning in 2003, but the associated regulation includes loopholes that allow shark fins to be removed on board and landed separately from shark bodies, which hampers enforcement.

"We owe so much of our success to the tens of thousands of divers across Europe and beyond who voiced their concern for sharks," said Suzanne Pleydell, Director for Project AWARE Foundation in Europe. "By demonstrating the economic benefits of sound shark stewardship, divers brought new EU Member States to the debate to support a stronger finning policy that reflects the values of the entire European Union, not just its shark fishing powers."

Parliament's final report now goes to the EU Council of Ministers and Commission as part of the process to finalize the regulation. Conservation groups stressed that finning bans alone are insufficient to save sharks.

"Strong finning bans are fundamental to effective shark fisheries management and particularly important for shark fishing powers like the EU, but our work is far from done," said Sonja Fordham, President of Shark Advocates International. "We urge swift finalization of the amended finning regulation, and remain committed to securing additional, complementary safeguards including science-based limits on shark catch and trade."

The groups are turning their sights to the next big battleground for sharks: the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) whose Parties meet in March to consider proposals to list commercially valuable, threatened shark species, including porbeagles, hammerheads, and oceanic whitetips. Proponents for listing include the EU and U.S.

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Notes for Editors:

Shark Advocates International is a project of The Ocean Foundation established to advance science-based policies for sharks and rays.

The Shark Trust is the UK charity for shark conservation, working to advance the worldwide conservation of sharks through science, education, influence and action.

Project AWARE Foundation is a growing movement of scuba divers protecting the ocean planet – one dive at a time.

Shark Advocates International, Shark Trust, and Project AWARE are working as part of a new coalition with Wildlife Conservation Society, Humane Society International, and the German Elasmobranch Society to secure CITES protections for sharks and rays.