

Priority Actions for Sharks

**2018 MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT)**

Prevent collapse of Shortfin Makos

For a decade, scientists have warned that shortfin mako sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) are exceptionally vulnerable to overfishing in ICCAT fisheries. ICCAT has since banned retention of several other, less valuable shark species. In 2017, the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) reported depletion and ongoing overfishing of North Atlantic shortfin makos, estimated that only a 0t catch (including dead discards) could result in population rebuilding by 2040 (54% probability), and recommended a “complete prohibition on retention” as the most effective immediate measure for achieving this goal. For South Atlantic makos, there is greater uncertainty; the SCRS suggested a catch

limit of ~2000t. In response, in 2018, ICCAT agreed a binding measure that fell far short of the North Atlantic advice and did nothing to safeguard South Atlantic makos. Concrete, science-based fishing limits are imperative for preventing collapse of these exceptionally valuable populations. Banning retention throughout the Atlantic remains the most prudent course, given the species’ vulnerability and demonstrated decline.



SPOTLIGHT ON NORTH ATLANTIC SHORTFIN MAKOS

TIMELINE

- OCTOBER 2017:** SCRS reports need to cut catch to <500t to stem depletion, recommends retention ban to rebuild by 2040
- NOVEMBER 2017:** At Annual Meeting, ICCAT fails to heed scientific advice, agrees instead multi-phase approach to minimize landing of live makos immediately, review measure and revise as needed in 2018, and develop a rebuilding plan in 2019
- MARCH 2018:** US takes emergency action to require fishermen to carefully release shortfin makos unless dead and taken by pelagic longline fisheries (which are monitored electronically) or if taken by permitted recreational fishermen and >210 cm fork length
- MARCH 2018:** European Commission instructs EU Member States to implement ICCAT mako measure
- APRIL 2018:** Canada bans recreational retention, mandates release of makos retrieved alive by commercial vessels
- OCTOBER 2018:** Deadline for ICCAT Parties to report catch (including discards) for first six months of 2018
- NOVEMBER 2018:** ICCAT ANNUAL MEETING Scheduled review of January – June reported catch and opportunity for additional action



Figure 1: Kobe phase plot for North Atlantic shortfin mako showing current status (2015) based on all assessment models. Ref: SCRS 2017

MEETING CONSERVATION GOALS?

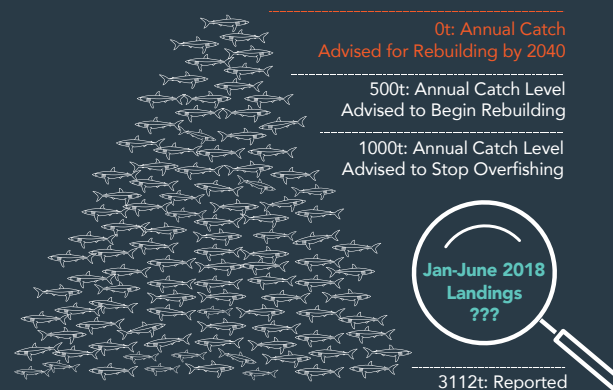


Figure 2: Total shortfin mako catches from North Atlantic 2017, 2018 catches tbc. Ref: SCRS 2018.

ACT NOW!

Recalling the 2017 commitment to “immediately taking actions to end overfishing,” we urge ICCAT to now:

- Reconsider the remedy deemed by SCRS as “most effective”: a complete prohibition on retention throughout the North Atlantic
- Ban landings for all Parties falling short of data reporting requirements
- At a minimum, augment the current measure to ensure annual landings are kept to under 500t.

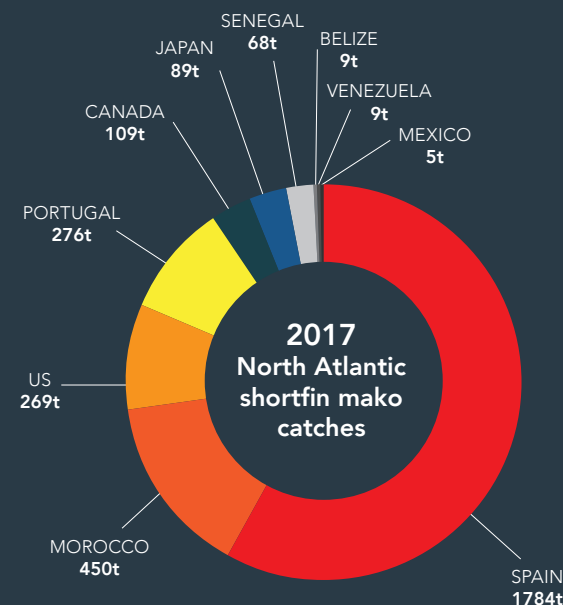


Figure 3: Top 10 North Atlantic shortfin mako catches 2017, by country, tonnage.

MAKING GOOD ON FIRST STEP?

Countries applying *some* new mako measures domestically

	Spain	✓
	Morocco	?
	US	✓
	Portugal	✓
	Canada	✓
	Japan	?
	Senegal	?
	Belize	?
	Venezuela	?
	Mexico	?

PROTECT SOUTH ATLANTIC MAKOS

Although the status of the South Atlantic population is less clear, a retention ban is prudent in the face of this uncertainty, especially given the enforcement challenges, species’ vulnerability, and lessons from the North Atlantic.

Limit Blue Shark Catch

Blue sharks rank fourth by weight for species taken by ICCAT fisheries, yet ICCAT has set no concrete limits on catch.

Preliminary 2017 data reveal that North Atlantic blue shark catches could well exceed the threshold established by ICCAT in 2016 (39,675t vs. 39,102t average for two consecutive years). This threshold should be transformed into a total allowable catch limit to better prevent overages.

The SCRS could not rule out overfishing of South Atlantic blue sharks, strongly recommended a precautionary approach for this population, and suggested a catch limit of 28,923t (based on the formula used for the North).

ICCAT should establish science-based blue shark catch limits now – before populations become seriously overfished and more severe measures are needed.

Strengthen the Finning Ban

ICCAT's ban on finning (the wasteful practice of slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea) is hard to enforce and exacerbates inadequacies in shark catch information. Replacing the current fin-to-carass ratio limit with a ban on removing shark fins at sea would:

- ease enforcement burden
- eliminate wiggle room to fin sharks; and
- facilitate the collection of shark-specific catch data

The 2018 “fins attached” proposal has been co-sponsored by 20 Parties (and counting); previous proposals have gained support from ~80% of ICCAT Parties in attendance. It's high time for ICCAT to join other Atlantic and Mediterranean Regional Fishery Management Organizations (NEAFC, NAFO & GFCM) and adopt this best practice for finning ban enforcement.



Figure 4: Progress Toward a Stronger ICCAT Finning Ban

UNENFORCEABLE HALF MEASURES ARE NOT ENOUGH TO SAVE SHARKS

The Shark League coalition urges ICCAT to:

- Protect makos
- Limit blue shark catch
- Ban at-sea shark fin removal



sharkadvocates.org

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