



Seek Adventure. Save the Ocean.™

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OFFICES: Australia, Canada, China, Japan, United Kingdom, United States

28 September 2021

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

Dear Madam Secretary:

On behalf of the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), the world's largest ocean exploration and diver organization, I am writing to encourage you to restore the United States' role as global shark champion by pursuing urgently needed conservation actions that scientists advise. Specifically, I urge you to ensure that the Department of Commerce National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) supports and works to secure a complete ban on endangered North Atlantic shortfin Mako sharks through the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), as a 2021 priority.

With a global network of dive centers and professional members, including 870 PADI registered dive center and resort member businesses and an estimated 3.4 million recreational divers in the U.S., PADI enables millions of people to explore and help heal the ocean through education, life-changing experiences, and travel, as well as contributing an estimated \$11 billion to the US economy. Our non-profit PADI AWARE Foundation promotes ocean health through underwater citizen science, public policy, and education, as well as community grants for local conservation initiatives. Dive tourism depends on healthy underwater environments and is driven by top attractions, like sharks. Together, PADI and PADI AWARE Foundation have developed a *Blueprint for Ocean Action*, which includes a primary objective of protecting the most vulnerable sharks.

As you may know, shortfin mako sharks are exceptionally imperiled by overfishing. Nevertheless, for four years now, ICCAT member governments have failed to adequately act on a clear call from scientists to ban all retention from the seriously depleted and declining North Atlantic population. We have been disappointed that the U.S. has repeatedly fought against the ICCAT scientific advice in favor of allowing continued landings and even intentional killing of makos from this region. The recovery horizon already spans many decades and momentum is growing for a multilateral effort led by Canada, Senegal, and the U.K to finally heed science and reverse decline before it's too late.

It is critical for both ecosystems and the businesses that depend on them that we balance the needs of humanity and the ocean. I am hopeful that you will lead the Department of Commerce into a new era of marine stewardship and sustainability, starting with long overdue U.S. support for complete protection of North Atlantic makos. Thank you for your consideration of this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Drew Richardson
President and CEO
PADI Worldwide