

April 2nd, 2020

The Honourable Bernadette Jordan
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
200 Kent Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6



Dear Minister Jordan:

As members of the Shark League, a non-profit coalition dedicated to science-based conservation of inherently vulnerable sharks, we write to urge immediate Canadian protections for endangered shortfin makos. Specifically, we ask that shortfin mako retention bans be added to the 2020 license conditions for all domestic fisheries that encounter makos, particularly Canada's pelagic longline fleet for "swordfish and other tunas."

Our organizations serve as accredited observers of the regional management body responsible for Atlantic pelagic shark fishing restrictions: the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). We also participate in various domestic stakeholder advisory processes relevant to ICCAT and sharks.

As you are likely aware, ICCAT's scientific committee has documented serious overfishing of North Atlantic shortfin makos and has recommended (since 2017) a retention ban and bycatch mitigation. In 2019, this committee reported that cutting annual catches (including dead discards) to below 300t would give this slow-growing population a 60% chance of rebuilding in 50 years. Retention bans can be effective for achieving significant reductions in shortfin mako mortality because post-release survival can be as high as 75%.

We remain deeply grateful that Canada joined Senegal to propose that ICCAT adopt this clear scientific advice for makos at the 2019 annual meeting, and we are eager to work with your government to ensure continued progress toward this goal later this year. We stress that interim domestic mako protection would clearly demonstrate for other ICCAT Parties Canada's commitment to responsible, science-based mako management, and thereby enhance the government's chances for success in securing complementary action by ICCAT.

We stress that domestic shortfin mako retention bans are consistent with your Ministerial Mandate to prioritize fish population rebuilding using "good scientific evidence" and to protect marine species at risk with "world-leading" plans. Indeed, Canada has a key yet fleeting chance to lead the Atlantic region toward safeguarding both marine ecosystem health and future economic opportunities by preventing the collapse of these vital ocean predators.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,


Shannon Arnold
Ecology Action Centre




Sonja Fordham
Shark Advocates Int'l




Ali Hood
Shark Trust




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Project AWARE



cc: Derek Mahoney, Resource Management, derek.mahoney@dfo.mpo.gc.ca; Brian Lester, Resource Management, brian.lester@dfo.mpo.gc.ca; Derrick Millburn, International Fisheries Management, derrick.milburn@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Our groups formed the Shark League with funding from the Shark Conservation Fund. More information at www.sharkleague.org.