

Kiwis urged to support ban on shark finning

Wellington, 10 November 2013 – Kiwis are being urged to support a government proposal to ban shark finning in New Zealand.

Shark finning is the practice of killing a shark, cutting off its fins and then dumping the body at sea and is legal in New Zealand waters.

Today the government announced (1) it is starting a four-week review of its rules around shark fishing and conservation, first set out in a National Plan of Action for sharks in 2008. At that time finning live sharks was made illegal. It is now proposing a ban which means sharks cannot be killed just for their fins. Either the whole shark has to be used or it must be returned to the water.

The New Zealand Shark Alliance (NZSA) says the proposal is good news for sharks and New Zealand's environmental reputation.

"We strongly support today's announcement and will be encouraging the government to implement the ban quickly, especially in the highly migratory species fishery which is New Zealand's main shark finning fishery," says Katrina Subedar, NZSA spokesperson and Forest & Bird Marine Conservation Advocate.

"Once this becomes law New Zealand will join over 100 other countries and states to have banned this senseless and wasteful practice.

"Until now other countries have been banning finning or creating shark sanctuaries while our government has continued to put our clean, green brand under threat."

New Zealand is among the world's top 10 nations for killing and exporting sharks (2), is a major exporter of shark fins to Hong Kong and recently became the biggest exporter of dried shark fins to the United States. (3)

Greenpeace New Zealand Oceans Campaigner Karli Thomas says there is huge support from Kiwis for a ban on shark finning.

"This year tens of thousands of people have pledged their support for a ban. Now we're urging them to go online and support the government's proposal," she says.

Milena Palka WWF-NZ Marine Species Advocate says around the world shark finning is threatening the survival of many shark species.

"Globally around 270,000 sharks are killed every day and the trade in shark fins is driving much of this slaughter (4). This is causing a serious decline in the world's shark populations, and many species are under threat. It's a huge waste and the very opposite of sustainable fishing."

The New Zealand Shark Alliance is a group of organisations and scientists working together to ban shark finning in New Zealand waters and to protect sharks. It includes Forest & Bird, Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd New Zealand, Shark Fin-Free Auckland, WWF, Our Seas Our Future, ECO, White Shark Conservation Trust, New Zealand Underwater, The ITM Fishing Show, Kelly Tarlton's Sealife Aquarium and Earthrace Conservation.

Ends

Notes:

- 1) <http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Consultations/npoa+sharks+2013/default.htm?WBCMODE=PresentationUnpublished>
- 2) <http://www.traffic.org/home/2013/7/30/new-study-gets-its-teeth-into-shark-trade-regulations.html>
- 3) http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/domes_fish/ReportsToCongress/SharkFinningReport12.pdf
- 4) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-21629173>

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