

Shark Fin Soup drives shark overfishing in NSW

In NSW during 2005/06, over 160 tonnes of sharks were caught and killed, mainly for use in shark fin soup or fish and chips. Nearly half this catch was listed as 'shark, unspecified', meaning we don't know what types of sharks are being captured. The removal of these animals has potentially catastrophic consequences for the entire marine food web.

In May 2004 the Australian Government released the National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (Shark-plan). The Shark-plan recognised the large risk of shark overfishing in Australia and recommended urgent action to address this risk.

Despite this recognition, there has been a steady increase in shark catches in NSW, especially in the 'shark, unspecified' category. Shark catches in the NSW Ocean Trap and Line Fishery, the commercial fishery that is also known to significantly impact on the critically endangered Grey Nurse Shark, has increased from 70 tonnes in 1997 to over 130 tonnes in the last financial year. 75 tonnes of this was 'shark, unspecified'. Reports from commercial fishers are that more and more people are gearing up to go shark fishing due to the high profitability of this market, and catch is expected to increase.

The NSW Government has finally responded to concerns about shark fishing by environment groups and some commercial fishers by releasing a discussion paper on the 'Proposed Arrangements for the Landing of Large Sharks in the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery'. This discussion paper outlines new measures to limit shark fishing but in NCC's opinion does not go far enough. More work needs to be done to determine species-specific limitations, as ecological demands differ.

We encourage you to comment on this discussion and ask the NSW Government to take real and urgent action to protect sharks from overfishing. You can download a copy of the discussion paper below. Consider making the following comments in your submission:

Sharks are a vital part of the marine food chain and are already known to be at risk. Expansion of the shark fishing industry in NSW must be prevented and the current level of fishing reduced.

- Sharks are especially susceptible to fishing pressure due to slow reproductive cycle, slow growth and few young produced.
- The proposed total catch limit of 90 tonnes (dressed weight) is too high. Any targeted shark fishery should only be considered if there is scientific evidence to support the sustainability of the fishing and that sets meaningful limits. The proposal to have a weekly catch limit within any total catch limit is supported as this will help to prevent a 'race to fish' mentality.
- Catch limits must be set for individual species. The large catch of 'shark – unspecified' shows how little is known about shark catches. Different species have different ecological requirements and will be able to resist different levels of fishing pressure. Catch limits must be set to species – specific requirements.
- Commercial fishers must be required to report all sharks caught to individual species level.
- Fishing targeted at wobbegong sharks must be stopped. The current daily limit of 12 wobbegongs is too high.

Send your submission to:

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Send a copy of your submission to:

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Read the discussion paper [Proposed Arrangements for the Landing of Large Sharks](#)

Read more about shark fin soup.

Read more about the NCC legal challenge.