

# Shark Fin Sale Bans Would Hurt U.S. Fishermen Without Improving Shark Conservation, Management

*February 18, 2020*

A message from NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator Chris Oliver regarding the implications of shark fin sale bans on fishermen.

[Leadership Message](#) | [National](#)

*Pelagic blacktip shark in open water. Credit: Getty Images.*

The United States has some of the best managed shark fisheries in the world. Our laws and regulations prevent overfishing while maximizing commercial fishing opportunities and the economic value of our shark fisheries. Part of our science-based management is allowing fishermen to sell both the meat and fins of sustainably harvested sharks.

For decades, U.S. fishermen have been barred from removing shark fins and discarding the body at sea, a practice known as shark finning. With a limited exception for smooth dogfish, sharks must be brought to shore with their fins naturally attached. Under current federal law, fishermen and dealers can then remove and sell the fins along with other parts of the shark.

Preventing shark fishermen from selling these fins would not improve domestic conservation and management. We are required by the [Magnuson-Stevens Act](#) to prevent overfishing in our shark fisheries regardless of whether fins are allowed to be sold or not. A ban on the sale of shark fins would only regulate which parts of a sustainably harvested shark can be used.

U.S. federal or state bans would also have little impact on the global fin market. The United States exports approximately 1 percent of all globally traded shark fins, and we import an even smaller percentage.

The largest impact of a national shark fin sale ban would fall on our fishermen. Because they have a higher economic value than shark meat, fins are key to any commercial shark operation. If fishermen were required to discard sharks fins that were harvested sustainably under strict federal management, they would have less income.

Domestic bans on harvesting fins would also undermine our efforts to promote international dialogue and negotiations on sustainable shark management. Responsibly participating in the global fin trade allows the United States to showcase

our strong conservation and management practices overseas. Dive deeper into misperceptions surrounding the shark fin trade in [a new feature story](#).

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to preventing overfishing of our shark fisheries. As a global leader in conservation, we are also committed to advancing sustainable shark management practices around the globe. Both of these priorities are possible thanks to our transparent, rigorous, and science-based management process.

Chris Oliver  
NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator

### **More Information**

- [Department of Commerce Views Letter on the Proposed Shark Fin Sales Elimination...](#)
- [Understanding Fisheries Management in the United States](#)
- [Shark Conservation Act](#)
- [Understanding Atlantic Shark Fishing](#)
- [International Shark Conservation](#)
- [U.S.-Caught Sharks are a Sustainable Food Choice](#)