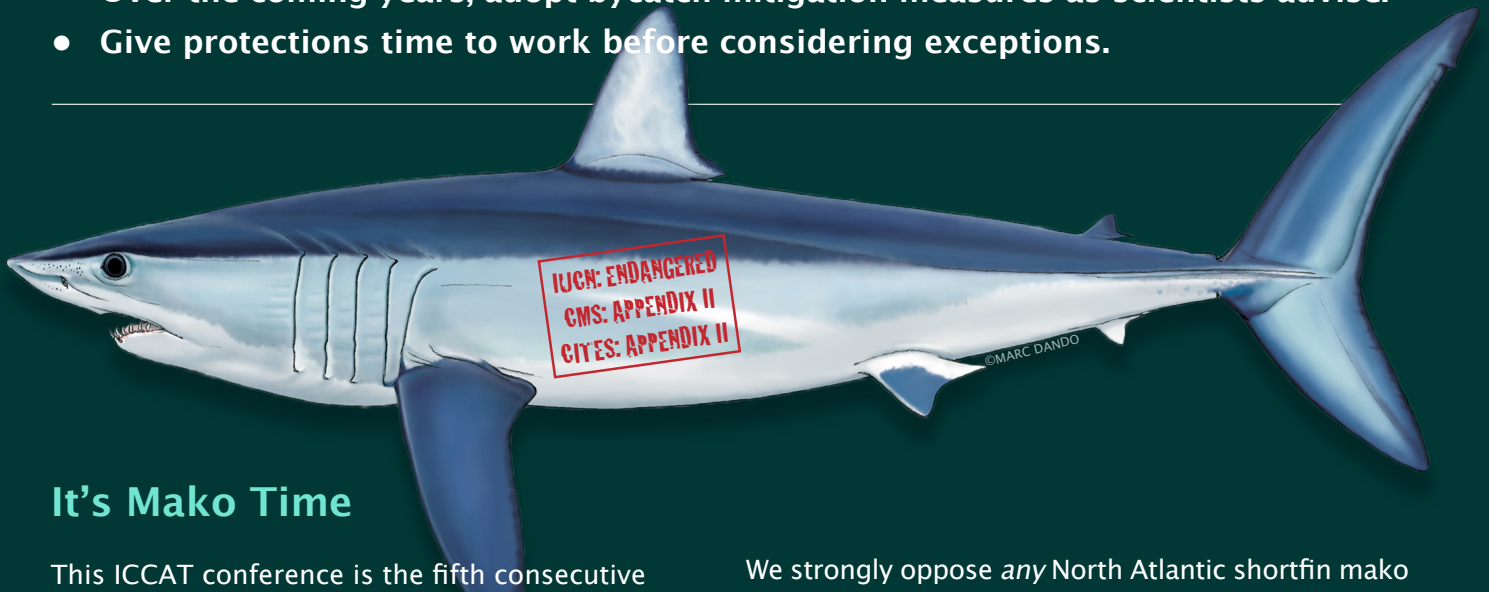


Shark League Position Statement

Top Priority: Protect North Atlantic Shortfin Mako Sharks

Conservation action to prevent collapse of the exceptionally slow growing, seriously overfished North Atlantic shortfin mako population is long overdue and increasingly urgent. The prudent course for starting on the long road to recovery involves the following key steps:

- Immediately ban retention and base recovery plan on $\geq 70\%$ chance of success.
- Over the coming years, adopt bycatch mitigation measures as scientists advise.
- Give protections time to work before considering exceptions.



It's Mako Time

This ICCAT conference is the fifth consecutive annual meeting during which Parties will grapple with ICCAT scientists' advice for reversing the dangerous decline of North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks. The 2017 Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) advice for a complete ban on retention and bycatch mitigation measures has been met – to date -- with insufficient management action, exacerbating population depletion and risking a collapse that is irreparable in our lifetimes.

The Shark League partner organizations are pleased that ICCAT Parties have recently made time for makos and appear committed to reaching a new agreement for the North Atlantic at this meeting. We remain deeply concerned, however, that some may still be considering exceptions to the clear centerpiece of the SCRS advice for this beleaguered population: **a complete prohibition on retention, without exception**. Such a ban, imposed over many years, is essential to achieving the substantial mortality reduction needed to reverse decline. The SCRS has deemed it the most effective immediate measure due in part to mako's high rates of post-release survival (up to 77%).

We strongly oppose *any* North Atlantic shortfin mako landing allowances because they:

- Run counter to SCRS advice for a non-retention policy "*without exception*"
- Create incentive for irresponsible practices that cause stress and ensure mortality
- Further delay a multidecadal recovery.

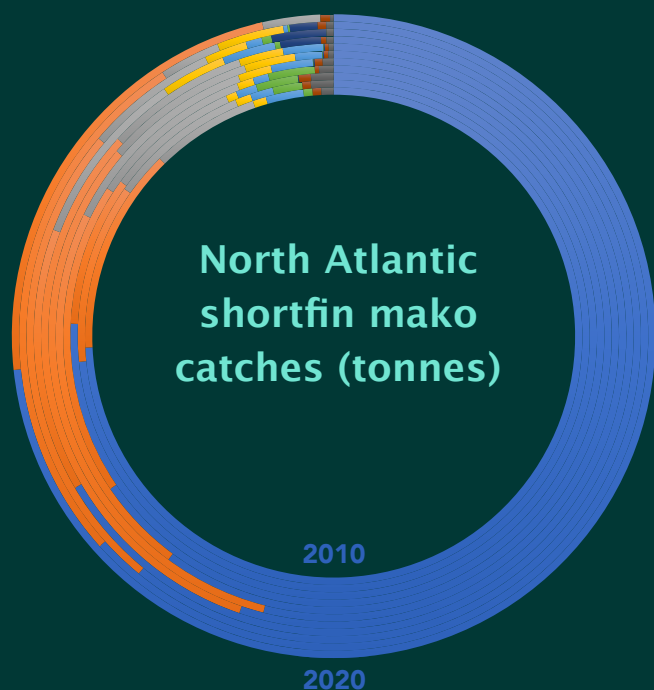
We remind Parties that retention bans are:

- Straight-forward and readily enforceable
- Essential for removing incentives to encounter and kill valuable, threatened species
- The most common shark conservation measure imposed by ICCAT and its Parties
- Less restrictive than closing fisheries for the main target species.

Additional measures to minimize mako bycatch mortality are needed to boost recovery but cannot replace the ban or succeed without it. Once this cornerstone is in place, Parties can focus on augmenting it with initiatives aimed at helping fishers avoid makos and safely release those caught incidentally.

Give Makos a Break

As highlighted over the last decade by the SCRS, mako sharks have exceptionally low reproductive rates and are therefore particularly susceptible to overfishing. Females don't begin to reproduce until age 18 or later, remain pregnant for up to 18 months, and produce just 4–25 pups every 2–3 years. Because of their life history characteristics, recruitment levels do not fluctuate widely from year to year. Long-term overfishing in the North Atlantic is likely to take half a century or more to repair. Indeed, the SCRS predicts the population will continue to decline until 2035. Planning to lift or relax protections before the stock begins to rebound, particularly while it is still declining, would be egregiously irresponsible.

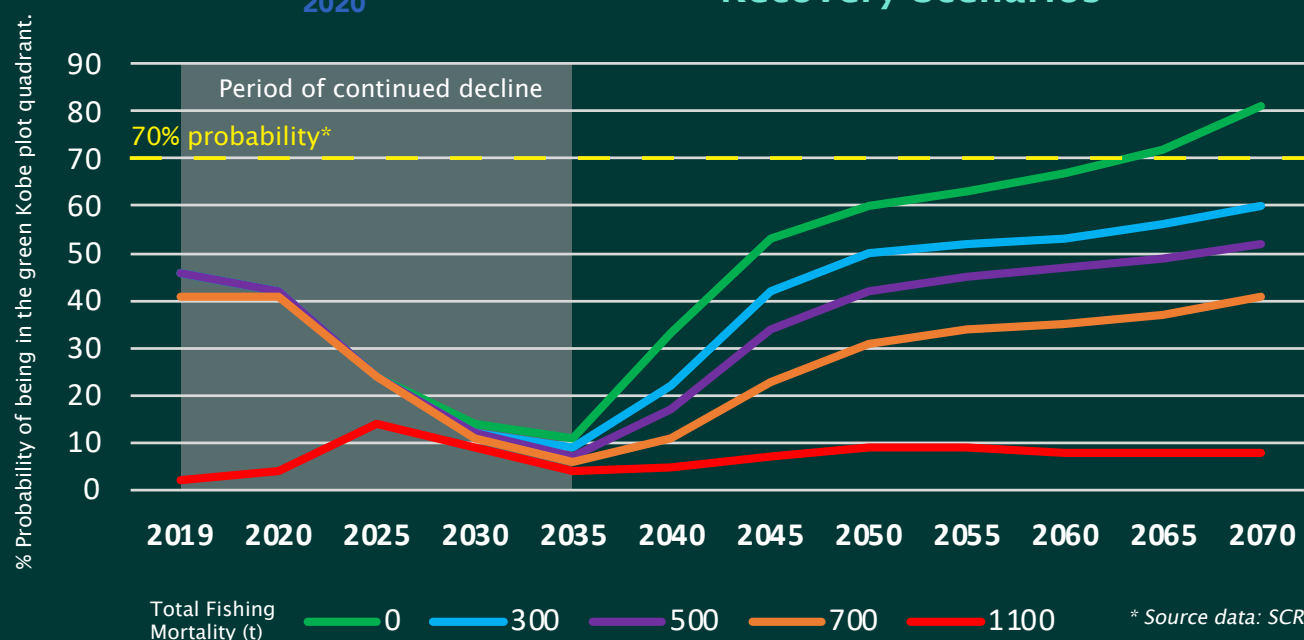


Sharks: Use Caution

As suggested by the UK and Norway and demonstrated by US Atlantic shark management measures, rebuilding plans for slow growing sharks should be based on a 70% chance (at least) of meeting recovery goals. Incorporating a high probability of success is especially important for reversing decline of North Atlantic shortfin makos, as such a depleted and vulnerable population warrants a particularly cautious management approach.

Consider CITES Commitments

Pursuant to the 2019 listing of makos under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), EU and UK experts have found that North Atlantic shortfin mako trade (including landings from the high seas) is unsustainable and should cease. By ensuring complementary, science-based safeguards across fisheries and environment authorities, Parties can ensure treaty obligations are met while setting a good example for other regions and marine species.



Other Shark Issues Need Attention

Once a North Atlantic shortfin mako retention ban is adopted, instead of prematurely revisiting population status, Parties should shift their focus to other pressing shark conservation issues. In addition to bycatch mitigation and compliance, ICCAT, with guidance from the SCRS, should address:

- The lack of protection for similarly vulnerable South Atlantic shortfin makos
- Recent overages of the South Atlantic blue shark total allowable catch limit
- The conservation status of previously prohibited shark species as well as common threshers.

Strengthen ICCAT's Finning Ban

We support the proposal to replace the ban's complicated fin-to-carcass ratio with a requirement to land sharks with fins naturally attached. This best practice can:

- Ease enforcement
- Eliminate wiggle-room to fin sharks without detection
- Facilitate collection of much needed, species-specific catch data.

It's high time that ICCAT adopted this best practice.



The Shark League urges ICCAT to take the following actions at the 2021 annual meeting:

- Ban all retention of makos and agree a precautionary recovery framework
- Commit to allocate the South Atlantic blue shark TAC by 2023
- End at-sea removal of shark fins.

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