



# NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA05-081  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 20, 2005

## **PACIFIC FISHING NATIONS POISED TO ADOPT BAN ON SHARK FINNING**

On June 20-24, 2005, members of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) will convene in Lanzarote, Spain, to consider fishery management and conservation measures, including a ban on shark finning. Shark finning is the practice of slicing the fin off the shark and discarding the carcass to save space on a fishing vessel.

Recent increases in shark catches, as well as an expansion of the geographic areas fished, have led to global concern about the status of some shark populations. International cooperation is critical as many species of sharks are highly migratory, and regularly cross national boundaries throughout all oceans of the world.

For many years, NOAA has led domestic and international efforts to ban shark finning. In 1993, NOAA prohibited U.S. vessels from shark finning in waters of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. The United States proclaimed shark finning to be a wasteful practice in the Shark Finning Prohibition Act adopted by Congress in 2000. In 2002, the finning prohibition was extended to apply to all persons under U.S. jurisdiction, including all U.S. vessels fishing in Pacific waters. NOAA has continued to work with the U.S. Department of State to encourage other countries to adopt similar conservation measures.

The IATTC has embraced the need to address this important conservation issue. The organization has been working for more than a year to consider proposals to end shark finning in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Most IATTC signatory nations have already expressed their agreement with the spirit of the proposals. An international ban in the Pacific is now considered by many to be ripe for approval, given that an international shark finning ban for the Atlantic Ocean was adopted in November 2004.

In November 63 countries, including the United States, reached an agreement in New Orleans to ban shark finning in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and Mediterranean Sea. This binding agreement was formally adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), and is now being implemented by all member countries.

The ICCAT agreement is now on the table for consideration at the June meeting of the IATTC; it is widely expected that this measure will be given serious consideration and adopted, given the momentum of recent events.

The IATTC and ICCAT are both international commissions that are responsible for the conservation and management of highly migratory fish stocks, including sharks. The United States is a member of both commissions. The IATTC convention area is in the Eastern Pacific Ocean while the ICCAT convention area includes the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Gulf of Mexico.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission: <http://www.iattc.org>