



**PRESS CONTACT**

Bob Vanasse

[bob@stoveboat.com](mailto:bob@stoveboat.com)

(202) 333-2628

## **Reintroduced Shark Trade Bill Promotes Successful U.S. Conservation Policies at Global Level**

*Bill incentivizes nations to follow U.S. example of successful management*

January 31, 2019 – WASHINGTON – A bipartisan bill introduced in the U.S. House advances global shark conservation by ensuring that all shark and ray products imported into the United States meet the same high ethical and sustainability standards required of American fishermen. The bill has broad support from conservation groups, zoos, aquariums and the fishing industry. A companion bill is expected soon in the Senate; Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) introduced a similar bill in the last Congress.

The Sustainable Shark Fisheries and Trade Act of 2019 (SSFTA), [H.R. 788](#), introduced by Rep. Daniel Webster (R-FL), and co-sponsored by Reps. Ted Lieu (D-CA), Bill Posey (R-FL), José Serrano (D-NY), among others, creates a transparent certification program for countries seeking to import shark products into the United States, modeled on similar laws that protect sea turtles and marine mammals across the globe. Similar legislation is expected to be introduced in the Senate.

Nations wishing to take advantage of the U.S. market for shark and ray products must prove they have an effective prohibition on the reprehensible and wasteful practice of shark finning, and have shark and ray management policies comparable to those under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Unlike legislation (H.R. 737) from Rep. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (D-NMI), which bans all trade of shark fins in the United States, the Sustainable Shark Fisheries and Trade Act creates incentives for improving shark conservation globally. The SSFTA punishes bad actors in other parts of the world while allowing responsible fishermen in the U.S. and elsewhere to realize the maximum value of their carefully managed and scientifically limited annual catch.

“Fishing is a long-standing profession and treasured American pastime, and particularly important in Florida,” said Rep. Webster. “Our responsibility is to balance the needs of the industry with conservation. This bill recognizes the

sacrifices American fishermen have made to rebuild and sustain our shark populations and calls on others to meet these same high standards.”

“We thank the Congressmen for introducing the Sustainable Shark Fisheries and Trade Act,” said Tad Mask, regional director of the Southeastern Fisheries Association in Tallahassee, Florida. “The bill promotes shark conservation and the successful model of American shark management, without threatening law-abiding U.S. fishermen.”

“The idea of a fin ban comes as a first step in environmental groups ultimate goal of ending all shark fishing,” said Greg DiDomenico, director of the Garden State Seafood Association. “The same groups pushing Rep. Sablan’s bill are also [calling](#) for an [end](#) to [shark fishing](#) tournaments. Supporting sensible shark conservation measures, like Rep. Webster’s, should be a common goal of the commercial and recreational fishing communities.”

U.S. shark fisheries are among the best managed in the world. In a [paper](#) published last year, Dr. David Shiffman, a Liber Ero Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Simon Fraser University, and Dr. Robert Hueter, Director of the Center for Shark Research at Mote Marine Laboratory, wrote that the U.S. “has some of the most sustainable shark fisheries on Earth” and called the U.S. “a model of successful management.”

Shark finning, the cruel practice of removing a shark’s fins at sea and discarding the rest of the shark, has been banned in the United States with industry support since the 1990s. Currently, when a shark is landed, the fins are left naturally attached.

The Sustainable Shark Alliance has long argued for the importance of obtaining the maximum value by fully utilizing the limited catches U.S. fishermen are allowed. A U.S. ban on the sale of fins deprives coastal communities of much needed income, while mandating waste of a valuable and culturally important resource.

“The answer to the problem of shark finning is not ‘reverse shark finning,’ by destroying the shark fins that are legally harvested,” said the Alliance’s counsel, Shaun Gehan. “It is to stop shark overfishing and waste of much needed shark protein in all the world’s shark fisheries. The SSFTA moves us in that direction.”

Prior versions of the Sustainable Shark Fisheries and Trade Act have been supported by commercial fishing industry groups, including but not limited to the Garden State Seafood Association, Southeastern Fisheries Association, North Carolina Fisheries Association, Directed Sustainable Fisheries, and Louisiana Shrimp Association; environmental groups, such as the Wildlife Conservation Society; and zoo and aquarium facilities, such as Mote Marine Laboratory, Palm Beach Zoo, SeaWorld, Zoo Miami Foundation and the Florida Aquarium. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has also written in support of approach.

**About the Sustainable Shark Alliance**

The Sustainable Shark Alliance (SSA) is a coalition of shark fishermen and seafood dealers that advocates for sustainable U.S. shark fisheries and supports well-managed and healthy shark populations. The SSA stands behind U.S. shark fisheries as global leaders in successful shark management and conservation.