Factsheet

Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act of 2019
Stop Wildlife Trafficking

H.R. 737 is led by Reps. Gregorio Sablan (D-MP) and Michael McCaul (R-TX). S. 877 is led by Sens. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Shelley Capito (R-WV).

What Does the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act do?
The Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act will prohibit the import, export, possession, trade and distribution of shark fins and products containing shark fins. It further asserts the U.S. leadership in global shark conservation, fortifies the ban on shark finning in the United States, and removes the U.S. from participating in the destructive global shark fin trade. In the 115th Congress, the bill had 262 House co-sponsors and 39 Senate cosponsors.

Why is a Ban on the Shark Fin Trade Needed?

Shark Finning is Cruel, Wasteful, and Unsustainable
Finning involves cutting off a shark’s fins while the shark is alive, then discarding the rest of the animal to die. It’s a cruel and wasteful practice fueled by the demand for shark fin soup. The fins bring a much higher profit to the poachers than the rest of the shark’s meat.

Shark Finning is Damaging Our Delicate Ocean Ecosystems
The global shark fin trade is unsustainable for shark populations worldwide and poses a tremendous threat to our ocean ecosystems. Sharks are predators and help the ecosystem by managing populations of species below them in the food chain. Research shows that a reduction in the population of sharks has a cascading effect on our marine ecosystems. Yet, sharks are being killed 30% faster than they can reproduce. Fins from as many as 73 million sharks are traded on the global market annually. About 16,815 metric tons of shark fins were traded worldwide from 2000-2011.

A Ban is Necessary to Fully End Finning
New legislation is necessary to protect sharks from the destructive shark fin trade. Under current law (the 2010 Shark Conservation Act) the act of finning, and possession of fins on board a vessel, is illegal in U.S. waters. However, the trade in shark fins is still allowed, which provides an incentive for finning. Without a ban on the trade, it can be difficult to prove that a shark fin sold in the U.S. was not from a shark finned here. Additionally, shark fins sold in the U.S. come from all over the world, including countries that allow finning, therefore contributing to this abhorrent practice. Only 11 U.S. states and 3 U.S. territories have bans: TX, MA, NY, IL, MD, DE, CA, OR, WA, RI, HI, American Samoa, Guam, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. In order to ensure the U.S. does not contribute to the shark fin trade – and to protect the shark population and our ecosystems – Congress must pass the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act.