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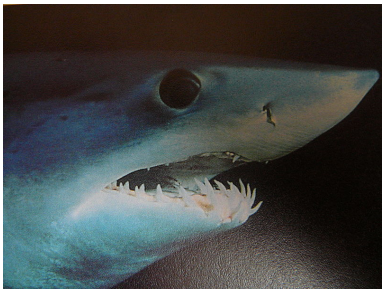
MEDIA RELEASE

Recreational fishing calls for delay on Mako ban.



Recfish Australia, the Game Fishing Association of Australia and the Australian National Sportfishing Association today call on Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett to delay legislating of three important gamefish species as Migratory Species under national environmental law.

Under an international agreement signed in December 2008, Shortfin Mako, Longfin Mako and Porbeagle Sharks have been listed under **Appendix II** of the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species. "Appendix II listing was never intended to impact on legitimate, sustainable fishing but under Australian law (the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*), no distinction is made between the two appendices and migratory species are automatically protected" said Len Olyott, CEO of Recfish Australia.

Minister Garrett announced on 18 December that catch and release fishing for the species would still be allowed but industry leaders feel the listing should be delayed until the EPBC Act has been amended to reflect the recommendations of the independent Hawke review.

An extensive review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity and Conservation Act* was tabled in Parliament on 21 December 2009 and amongst the 71 recommendations is a call for the Act to be repealed and replaced by a new Act. The review specifically recommends redrafting of the Act to allow the catch of **Appendix II** Migratory Species.

"Mako are an important game fish species to Australia's game fishers. 87% are tagged and released. Our tournaments are run under strict rules and a Code of Conduct. Occasionally one is kept for food or record purposes but our impact is negligible compared to the impact of commercial fishing which will be allowed to continue" said Grahame Williams, President of the Game Fishing Association of Australia. "We simply want to see maintenance of existing state bag limits which in NSW and Victoria is one fish per person". John Burgess, Executive Officer of the Australian National Sport Fishing Association echoed Williams, adding that volunteer sport fishers had played a valuable role in providing scientific information through dedicated tagging programs and their contribution to science and conservation should not be underestimated.

The proposed ban on killing the listed shark species will come into effect on 29 January 2010 when it will become mandatory for any interactions with the protected species to be reported. Fishers that fail to comply are liable for hefty fines and criminal convictions if prosecuted.

"This is not a conservation issue. We are fully supportive of genuine, evidence-based conservation initiatives and both Recfish Australia and GFAA have policies on threatened and protected species. This is about process and procedure. We simply do not have enough time to communicate to recreational fishers about this ban. The average fishers couldn't tell a mako from a blue shark and with lots of pointy teeth; few will be game to try. How will the reporting work? What about proper handling techniques to minimise injury to the fish and fisher? These are all issues that we need time to work out" added Olyott.

Recfish Australia, ANSA and GFAA believe that Minister Garrett has a range of options under the EPBC Act to grant an exemption or approval to recreational fishers. With over four million Australians fishing every year and generating millions of dollars for regional economies, this is an issue the Rudd Government should not ignore.

Links:
http://www.mesa.edu.au/seaweek2005/pdf_senior/is11.pdf
http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/research/areas/systems-research/wild-fisheries/outputs/2008/972/status_short/Mako-Sharks.pdf
http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/summary/121667621/SUMMARY

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Image: Close up of Shortfin Mako
Credit: Wikipedia Commons