



Species Survival Network

CITES COP15 2010 • Doha, Qatar



Oceanic Whitetip Shark *Carcharhinus longimanus*

CoP15 Prop. 16 (Palau and United States of America) Inclusion of *Carcharhinus longimanus* in Appendix II in accordance with Article II paragraph 2(a) of the Convention and satisfying Criterion A in Annex 2a of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP14). Inclusion in Appendix II, with the following annotation: "The entry into effect of the inclusion of *Carcharhinus longimanus* in Appendix II of CITES will be delayed by 18 months to enable Parties to resolve the related technical and administrative issues."

SSN VIEW: SUPPORT Adoption of Proposal

OCEANIC WHITETIP POPULATIONS HAVE DECLINED DRAMATICALLY.

The oceanic whitetip shark is one of the most widely distributed shark species, usually found far offshore between about 30° North and South in all oceans. Despite its widespread distribution, the species is conservatively categorized by IUCN (2009; see below) as Vulnerable globally, and as Critically Endangered in the Northwest and Western Central Atlantic. The species is unmanaged throughout its range, and falls into the FAO's lowest productivity category of the most vulnerable commercially exploited aquatic species.

Where data are available, they show the species is severely depleted. An analysis of the U.S. pelagic longline logbook data, which covers the Northwest and Western Central Atlantic regions, led to decline estimates of 60-70% between 1992 and 2000. An analysis of the Gulf of Mexico, using data from U.S. pelagic longline surveys in the mid-1950s and U.S. pelagic longline observer data in the late-1990s, estimated a decline of 99% over this forty-year period.

Where trend data are not available, but where unregulated fisheries exist and are a source of supply for the international trade, stocks are likely to be declining rapidly. For this reason, IUCN classifies the Northwest Atlantic and Western Central Atlantic populations (for which data exist) as Critically Endangered, while the global population (for which data are scarce) as Vulnerable. In IUCN's estimation, if data from areas outside the Northwest and Western Central Atlantic were available, the global population would probably be shown to have experienced declines similar to those of the Northwest and Western Central Atlantic, since fisheries for the species are similar in both areas. In other words, it is likely that the species meets the definition of Critically Endangered throughout most of its range.

THE OCEANIC WHITETIP QUALIFIES FOR LISTING ON CITES APPENDIX II.

Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP14) states that a species meets the criteria for listing on CITES Appendix II when “It is known, or can be inferred or projected, that the regulation of trade in the species is necessary to avoid it becoming eligible for inclusion in Appendix I in the near future” (Annex 2a, Paragraph A). Because the population declines for oceanic whitetip are in large part the result of trade, they clearly qualify the species for listing in Appendix II of CITES. In addition, the FAO Ad Hoc Expert Panel assessing the shark proposals concluded that, on balance, that the available evidence supports the proposal to include *C. longimanus* in CITES Appendix II.

LARGE FINS OF THE OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK ARE PRIZED IN ASIAN FIN MARKETS.

The oceanic whitetip shark is a ‘preferred species’ for shark fin soup due to its large, distinctive fins which are highly valued in Asian fin markets. The high value of the fins and low value of the meat has also led to widespread finning -- a wasteful and often illegal practice in which the fins are severed and the shark – often still living – is thrown back into the ocean. Fins of *C. longimanus* have an average auction price of \$122 per kg in Hong Kong.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT SHOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM FOR THIS SPECIES.

The oceanic whitetip is easy to distinguish from other sharks. The fins of the oceanic whitetip shark have distinctive white tips. There are a few other shark species with white-tipped fins, but these are far less commonly in trade. Genetic identification tools are also available. The 18-month grace period before the listing of this species comes into effect will allow sufficient time for any difficulties to be resolved and identification and enforcement systems to be implemented.

The oceanic whitetip shark satisfies the criteria for inclusion in CITES Appendix II. Listing on Appendix II is necessary to ensure that primarily commercial trade does not reduce the populations to levels at which the species would qualify for Appendix I in the near future. SSN strongly urges Parties to support this proposal.

-Revised 13 January 2010

Photo credits: Flickr/bubbleinsights, Neil & Marilena; NOAA; Flickr Creative Commons/Hamron