

Enhance International Shark Conservation

Support Proposal 15 to include Porbeagle Sharks (*Lamna nasus*) in CITES Appendix II

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*The Ocean Conservancy and the Shark Alliance urge CITES Delegates to: Support Proposal 15 to include Porbeagle Sharks (*Lamna nasus*) in CITES Appendix II.*

As proposed by Germany on behalf of the European Community Member States acting in the interest of the European Community.

PORBEAGLE SHARKS ARE:

- exceptionally slow-growing and vulnerable to overfishing
- heavily exploited to satisfy international demand for their parts
- prized for their meat and fins
- included on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as “Vulnerable” globally
- considered “Endangered” in the Northwest Atlantic, “Critically Endangered” off Europe
- traded internationally
- inadequately protected by most Range States, and
- not subject to bilateral or international management measures

The strong case for listing porbeagle sharks under CITES Appendix II presented in the EU proposal is bolstered by expert analyses of:

- TRAFFIC
- IUCN (World Conservation Union)
- Independent consultants to the European Commission
- The CITES Secretariat

A highly vulnerable species

Porbeagle sharks are exceptionally vulnerable to overfishing and long lasting depletion due to their slow growth, late maturity, and small litters. Females do not reproduce until they are teenagers and give birth to only about four pups after an 8-9 month pregnancy. Porbeagle sharks meet the criteria developed by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) for CITES listing of commercially exploited aquatic species. A low intrinsic rate of population increase of 5-7% per year and a generation time of 20-50 years put porbeagle sharks into the FAO's lowest productivity category.

Seriously depleted populations

Porbeagle shark populations have been heavily fished and severely depleted on both sides of the North Atlantic Ocean. Reproductive females in the Northwest Atlantic population have declined to 12-15% of former levels, according to a Canadian assessment. The Northeast Atlantic population has not been formally assessed, but Norwegian landings declined by 99% between 1936 and 2005. Available catch per unit effort data for Southern Hemisphere populations show decreases of 50-90% over just ten years late last century. Porbeagle sharks meet the criteria for inclusion in CITES Appendix II under Res Conf 9.24 (Rev CoP13), Annex 2a. Steep declines in North Atlantic populations appear to meet the criteria for listing under Appendix I.

Inadequate or non existent management

Porbeagle fishing is limited by only a few Range States; no management measures cover the range of the species; most have been inadequate to rebuild populations. Five years of quota management for Canadian Atlantic porbeagles have yet to lead to population rebuilding while mature females are reportedly still declining slightly. The US Atlantic porbeagle quota was based on landings and is not restrictive. Scientific advice from ICES to end fishing of Northeast Atlantic porbeagle sharks has not been implemented. In fact, this population remains completely unmanaged outside Sweden where it is protected. New Zealand's porbeagle quotas, implemented in 2004, are the only such limits in the Southern Hemisphere. Porbeagle sharks are highly migratory and yet there are no bilateral or international fisheries management measures for the species.

Valuable in trade

Porbeagle meat is among the most prized of all shark meat while the large fins are valuable for use in shark fin soup. Porbeagle sharks are therefore targeted, but also often kept as

bycatch, usually by pelagic longliners. Both meat and fins of porbeagle sharks enter international trade, although information is lacking due to poor reporting of species specific data. A rapid DNA test to determine species in trade is available to facilitate listing implementation.

Valuable in ecosystems

Like most sharks, porbeagles are important, top predators in marine food webs. By feeding on a variety of fish and invertebrates, healthy shark populations help keep oceans in balance. The Canadian fisheries department has reported that Northwest Atlantic porbeagle sharks are so depleted that they are no longer performing their role in the ecosystem. Scientists warn that removing such top predators may have unexpected, negative impacts on fish populations, including decreases in prey species.



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Including porbeagle sharks in CITES

Appendix II is:

- justified under the criteria in Res Conf 9.24 (Rev CoP13), Annex 2a
- essential for ensuring that international trade is held to sustainable levels
- complementary to existing fisheries management measures
- likely to spark enhanced assessment and management of populations worldwide
- important for improving international cooperation necessary for conservation
- key to improving data on the nature and extent of porbeagle fisheries and trade, and
- consistent with the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks.

IT'S TIME

CITES has been discussing sharks since 1994. Porbeagle sharks have long been among the most relevant shark species for CITES attention due to their extreme vulnerability, serious regional depletion, and high value of their internationally traded parts. The Animals Committee Shark Working Group has examined and found merit in proposals to list porbeagle sharks since 2004. Existing management programs are lacking and time is running out.

The Ocean Conservancy and the Shark Alliance urge CITES Delegates to vote in favor of Proposal 15 to include porbeagle sharks under CITES Appendix II.