

Shark Conservation Fund Investment Strategy 2018 - 2022

Sharks and rays represent one of the oldest and most diverse group of animals on earth. These cartilaginous fish play important ecological, cultural and economic roles in our oceans and coastal communities. However, one quarter of all shark and ray species are threatened with extinction and millions are killed annually for their meat, fins, leather, liver and gills. This crisis represents a growing threat to the health and well-being of our oceans and the billions of people that rely on them for food and employment.

The Shark Conservation Fund (SCF) is a philanthropic collaborative established in 2016 to address this crisis. Founding members are Paul G. Allen Philanthropies, Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust and Oceans 5. The SCF focuses on halting the overexploitation of the world's sharks and rays, preventing extinctions, reversing declines and restoring populations. We believe that major investments are needed in policy development, outreach and advocacy, conservation science, communications and media, capacity building and monitoring. Our goals are to:

1. Prevent the extinction of the most endangered sharks and rays by enhancing legal protections in priority countries and through international forums;
2. Ensure that the global trade in shark and ray products is effectively regulated under Appendix I or II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); and
3. Combat unsustainable shark and ray fishing through the adoption and implementation of conservation and management measures through international forums and in priority countries.

Preventing the Extinction of the Most Endangered Sharks and Rays

The SCF defines the sharks and rays that are the most endangered as “imperiled”, meaning they are categorized as Critically Endangered (CE), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU) or Data Deficient Predicted Threatened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)). These species can be broken into two general categories, endemic or widely distributed, each requiring a different management approach. Endemic sharks and rays are only found in certain regions or countries allowing for more geographically targeted conservation efforts. Therefore, an objective of the SCF is to protect imperiled endemic sharks in countries with high concentrations of those species.

Conservation of widely distributed imperiled sharks and rays requires different approaches because they lack a clear geographical focus. A number of these species are listed on Appendix I or II of CITES and Appendix I, II, or both I and II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), which offers an opportunity to use government obligations to implement these listings to promote their restoration through better management in target countries. In addition, a major source of mortality for these species is as bycatch or valuable secondary catch in high seas fisheries, which offers the opportunity to use measures such as the establishment of precautionary catch limits, time/areas closures or gear modifications or restrictions adopted by tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (tRFMOs) and in target countries as restoration tools.

Over the years, conservationists have focused on the most imperiled species to raise awareness of their plight and to drive the public and private sectors to action. Similarly, focusing on the most endangered families of sharks and rays provides another useful way to target species that are most in need of protection. Sawfishes are among the most threatened families of marine fishes. The IUCN classifies three of the five sawfish species as Critically Endangered and the other two as Endangered. Angel Sharks are the second most threatened family of elasmobranchs, containing at least 23 species, half of which are listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable by the IUCN. Hammerhead sharks are globally distributed, highly migratory and threatened with extinction. Three species are listed on Appendix II of CITES but are still top shark species in the Hong Kong fin trade.

What we Fund

Protection of imperiled endemic sharks and rays in priority countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and South Africa by:

- Establishing management measures such as time/area closures, species specific prohibitions, precautionary quotas where appropriate, as well as limiting fishing gear that results in high levels of shark and ray bycatch or bycatch mortality;
- Enhancing governmental capacity to develop, implement and enforce CITES Appendix I and II listings; and
- Supporting applied research designed to identify priority areas and times for protection, minimize bycatch and/or bycatch mortality provided that the projects are closely linked to development, modification, or enforcement of shark and ray management measures.

Conservation of widely distributed and/or highly migratory imperiled sharks and rays by:

- Establishing time/area closures designed to protect pupping grounds or nursery areas;
- Securing conservation and management measures to establish precautionary quotas where appropriate, ban retention of these species, minimize mortality of released species, and reduce non-target catch;
- Listing sharks and rays on Appendix I or II of CITES to enhance efforts to protect these imperiled sharks and rays; and
- Implementing CMS Appendix I or II listings, Concerted Actions and new listings.

Protection of the most endangered families of sharks and rays by:

- Implementing “Sawfish: A Global Strategy for Conservation”;
- Implementing the “Angelshark Action Plan for the Canary Islands” and the “Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Angelshark Conservation Strategy”; and
- Implementing CITES listings of hammerheads in select countries and regions.

Ensuring that Global Trade in Shark and Ray Products is Effectively Regulated Under CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, or CITES, was established to protect species of wild fauna and flora from overexploitation through international trade. CITES is among the world’s earliest and most powerful multi-national environmental agreements. It came into force in 1975, and today over 94% of the world’s countries are Parties. There are three Appendices to the Convention. Appendix I species are threatened with

extinction for which no international trade for primarily commercial purposes is allowed. Appendix II species may not be threatened, but may become so unless their trade is strictly regulated. Appendix III includes species that are subject to regulation within the jurisdiction of a Party, which needs the cooperation of other Parties to restrict overexploitation.

Trade in products from species listed in any of the Appendices is regulated under a system of permits and certificates, to ensure that it is legal and not detrimental to the status of wild populations of the listed species. A country's CITES Management Authority can only issue export permits that allow trade in species included in Appendix II (or non-commercial trade in species included in Appendix I) if the Scientific Authority of the exporting country has first advised that "such export will not be detrimental to the survival of that species". These non-detriment findings (NDFs) are intended to ensure that exports of products from listed species covered by the NDF have not harmed wild populations or ecosystems.

What we fund

The SCF's focus will be on:

- Making CITES listings work globally and in priority countries, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brazil and Uruguay, particularly through training, developing tools and guidelines, and capacity building. Priority will be given to:
 - Development of robust NDFs and Legal Acquisition Findings; and
 - Preparation for implementation reviews of selected shark and/or ray species.
- Preparing and advocating for additional listings of shark and ray species that are the top species in global trade and that meet the CITES listing criteria.
- Developing and introducing traceability systems for CITES listed sharks and rays so that their products are traceable and discernible from non-listed species in trade.

Combat Unsustainable Shark and Ray Fishing

Some species of sharks have life history characteristics (e.g., the production of more offspring and a lower age of sexual maturity) that may make them better suited to withstand fishing pressure. Given this and the fact that shark and ray fishing is an important source of protein and income in many countries, combating unsustainable shark fishing is important. To do this SCF will support the adoption of policies and regulations at international forums, as well as through implementation of those policies at the national level in target countries. Tuna RFMOs regulate fisheries that catch the largest numbers of sharks and rays in international waters. They also have authority over fisheries in 91% of the world's ocean surface and management measures that apply to the vessels of member countries wherever they fish for tuna and related species. The fisheries they regulate include long-line and purse seine fisheries that primarily target highly migratory species like tunas and billfish, but also catch sharks as an important secondary catch and are important sources of mortality for threatened migratory species like hammerhead, silky and thresher sharks.

The SCF will focus on the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). Both commissions have adopted important shark conservation measures and have oversight over some of the world's largest fisheries for pelagic sharks. Additionally, WCPFC has legal authority to manage sharks and ICCAT is considering amendments to its convention for such authority.

Implementation of CMS and CITES Appendix II listings can also be used to promote sustainable and legal fisheries management within countries wishing to trade in listed species through the development and implementation of NDFs and through the development of required CITES Legal Acquisition Findings and the development and implementation of CMS Concerted Actions.

Global demand for shark products such as meat, fins for soup and liver oil, drives unsustainable fishing and trade. Despite visible successes, demand for shark fins remains, and demand for shark and ray meat is increasing, making shark and ray conservation challenging. Efforts to reduce this demand can facilitate better shark and ray management.

What We Fund

The SCF will invest in efforts to secure:

- At ICCAT and WCPFC:
 - Adoption of precautionary science-based catch limits for shark species that are biologically able to support fisheries;
 - Standardized and increased observer coverage; and
 - Improved transparency and compliance with shark management measures.
- In target countries, such as Indonesia, Argentina, Malaysia, and Taiwan, the adoption of precautionary catch limits, time/area closures, gear restrictions, and fishing gear modifications to promote the restoration of threatened sharks and rays.
- Research and pilot programs designed to identify and protect pupping and nursery habitats within the EEZs of priority shark fishing nations, if the information gained will directly be used for management.
- Implementation of shark and ray listings at CITES and CMS to drive improved fisheries management within the EEZs of shark fishing nations, as well as on the high seas.
- Identification of behavioral drivers for the consumption of shark products and strategies to more effectively design and implement demand reduction campaigns.
- Utilization of demand reduction campaigns to improve shark and ray management in priority shark and ray catching and trading countries.