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Seventh Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region

Miami, Florida, 2 - 4 November 2016

ADDENDUM 1

Proposal to include 8 shark and ray species in Annexes II and III of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol

For reasons of economy and the environment, Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies of the Working and Information documents to the Meeting, and not to request additional copies.

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IMPROVING SHARK CONSERVATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

Proposal to include 8 shark and ray species on Appendix II and III of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) protocol

June 2016



The Government of the Netherlands and the Save our Sharks campaign of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance believe that the listing of Whale Sharks, Sawfishes, Oceanic Whitetip sharks on Appendix II, and Hammerhead Sharks, and Manta Rays on Appendix III of the SPAW protocol is warranted as these large predators play a vital role in the Caribbean ecosystem and the lack of management of these highly vulnerable species puts them at risk of becoming locally extinct.

Highly vulnerable species

Sharks are exceptionally vulnerable to overfishing and long lasting depletion due to their slow growth rate, late maturity, and few offspring. Females do not reproduce until they are teenagers and give birth to a small number of pups after a long pregnancy. Generation times for sharks species can be as much as 50 years, which puts them in the FAO's lowest reproductive category.

Seriously depleted populations

Shark populations have been heavily fished and severely depleted throughout the Atlantic Ocean. As reproducing females are often among the largest, most prized individuals, they tend to be most heavily targeted in fisheries.

Globally, sharks have become an important fishing commodity prized for their meat, but mainly for their fins, which is the key ingredient for shark fin soup, a delicacy all across Asia. The large demand for shark products combined with the innate vulnerability of sharks to fishing pressure led to steep decline in shark numbers worldwide, with some populations being reduced by over 90%.

Fisheries for sharks in the Caribbean are poorly studied and appear to be mainly artisanal in character. However, there is an indication of active local fisheries and an emerging trade in shark fins to the Asian market.

SPAW

The SPAW protocol is the only legislative tool for cross-border wildlife protection in the Wider Caribbean region. The protocol deals with area protection for unique and/or fragile habitats and has three annexes that deal with species-specific protection. Annex I only concerns plants, Annex II lists animal species that should not be commercially exploited, and annex III is meant for vulnerable plant or animal species that need to be managed to prevent further depletion. We propose Sawfishes, Whale sharks, and Oceanic Whitetip Sharks to be included in Appendix II of the protocol and Hammerhead Sharks and Manta Rays in Appendix III of the protocol.

CRITERIA FOR LISTING

WHALE SHARK (*Rhincodon typus*), proposed for Annex II
The world's largest fish species that can grow up to 15 meters.

- Exceptionally slow growing shark species
- Prized for its fins (sought after in Asia)
- Included on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as "Endangered"
- Listed on Appendix I of CITES and CMS MoU sharks



SAWFISHES (*Pristidae spp.*) proposed for Annex II
Distinctive ray species living in very shallow water

- Exceptionally vulnerable rays, due to slow growth, late maturity and few offspring
- Victims of severe overfishing and incidental catch worldwide
- Susceptible to incidental entanglement of their tooth-studded rostrum
- Often killed after capture for their valuable fins and rostra
- Subject to international trade for their parts and as live specimens for aquaria
- Included on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as "Critically endangered"
- Listed on Appendix 1 of CITES and in the CMS MoU sharks

OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) proposed for Annex II
Highly migratory oceanic species with severe population declines

- Moderate rebound potential and reproductive rate
- Listed as "Critically Endangered" in West Central Atlantic
- Estimated population declines of >90%
- Highly migratory nature requires international cooperation
- Listed on Appendix II of CITES



HAMMERHEADS (*Sphyrnidae spp.*) proposed for annex III
Iconic shark species with range throughout the Caribbean

- Exceptionally slow-growing and vulnerable to overfishing
- Heavily exploited to satisfy international demand for their parts
- Prized for their fins
- Included on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as "Endangered" (*S. lewini* & *S. mokarran*)
- Considered "Endangered" in the Western Central Atlantic
- Listed on Appendix II of CITES and CMS MoU sharks

MANTA RAYS (*Manta spp.*) proposed for annex III
Largest ray species in the Caribbean

- Exceptionally vulnerable rays due to extremely slow reproduction
- Regional small, sparsely distributed, and fragmented populations
- Subject to overfishing due to increasing demand for gill rakers for Chinese medicine
- Included on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as "Vulnerable"
- Listed on Appendix II of CITES, Appendix I of CMS, and CMS MoU sharks

