



**SHARK
ALLIES**

#StopTheFinTrade



KEYPOINTS & SUMMARY



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A Bi-Partisan Effort to Stop the Trade of Shark Fins is Underway

Legislation is currently being filed in Florida to ensure the State will no longer support and participate in the global trade of shark fins, a trade that is devastating shark populations around the world at a rate that is leading to the extinction of many shark species.

The fin trade continues to thrive despite regulations that prohibit the act of “finning” or requirements to “land sharks whole/fins attached”. Both provisions leave the door wide open to the continued targeting of sharks for their fins. Enforcement is complicated and beyond the capacity of most agencies. As long as fins can be freely sold and traded, the horrific act of finning will continue. Any State that supports the transport of fins through their ports and allows fins to be sold inadvertently also supports the global trade of a product that is decimating sharks; a product that has no nutritional value and effectively only serves one purpose: To represent wealth and status.

Florida is surrounded by the sea and its tourism and fishing economy depends on the ocean. Most citizens are shocked to find out that their own home state continues to allow, and enable the trade of fins. And most of them vehemently oppose this and want it stopped. If this bill passes, Florida will be a shining example for conservation and protection of sharks, rather than a participant in the fin trade.

Stefanie Brendl
Exec. Dir./ Founder Shark Allies

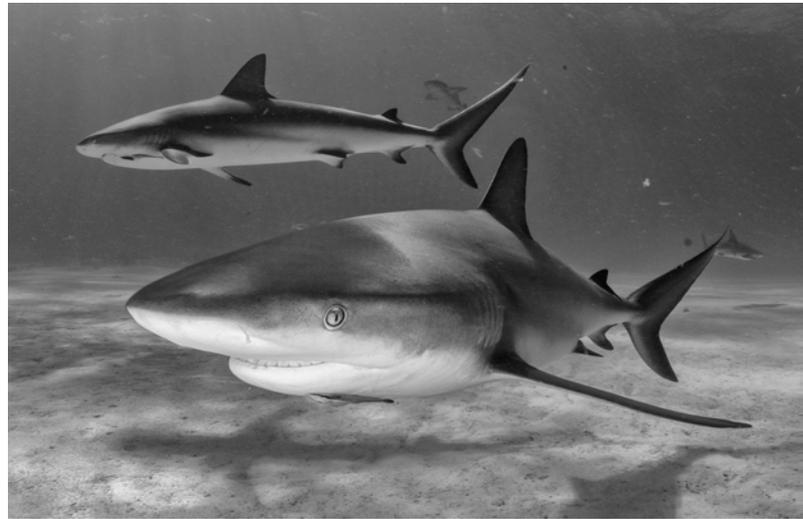
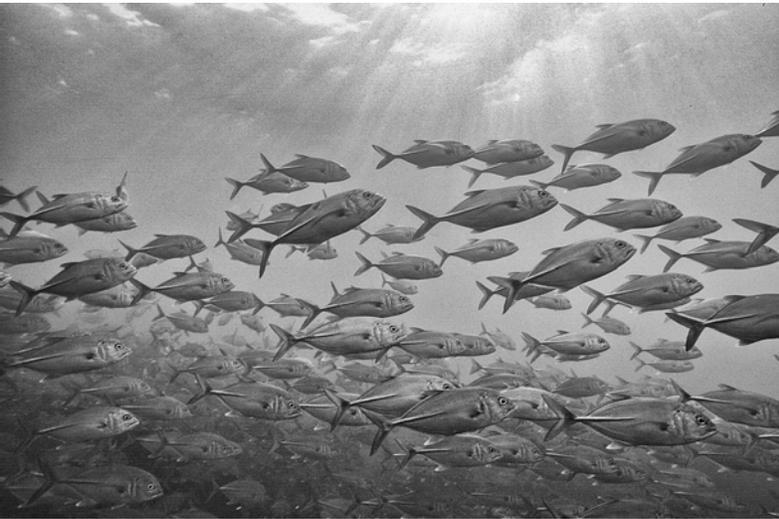
WHY ARE WE SO CONCERNED ABOUT SHARKS?

Sharks are top predators. They did not evolve to be hunted. Most shark species are slow to mature and reproduce only once a year or every other year, and when they do, may only have a few pups at a time. They do not reproduce like other fish, which may lay thousands of eggs within their first few years of age, and continue to do so frequently.

Therefore sharks cannot recover easily from overfishing. Once mature animals are taken from an area, it can take more than a decade for the next generation to be ready for reproduction.

Sharks had few predators for hundreds of millions of years until humans began to aggressively target them about 30 years ago. In this short time shark populations have been drastically impacted. Some have declined by 90-99% in several areas where they were naturally plentiful.

Rays are closely related to sharks as are all Elasmobranchs. Like sharks, large-bodied rays are slow to reproduce and are therefore highly susceptible to overfishing. Manta and mobula rays are finned, just like sharks.



- **1/3 of all shark species are threatened with extinction.**
- **80% of open ocean shark species frequently targeted in high seas fisheries are threatened or near threatened with extinction.**
- **All 14 species of shark most prevalent in the shark fin trade are Threatened or Near Threatened with extinction.**

WHAT IS FINNING?

Finning is the process whereby the fins of the shark are cut off and the rest of the animal is discarded, most often while the animal is still alive. The shark sinks to the bottom and dies a slow and agonizing death by either bleeding out, being eaten by other fish or slowly suffocating.

Sharks cannot swim or float without fins and most species cannot breathe while stationary. Fins will not grow back.

Finning is an utterly cruel and wasteful practice, and it has been banned in many countries in recent years. Finning exists due to the high demand and high profit margin for shark fins, which are the main ingredient for Shark Fin Soup.

Even if finning doesn't take place at sea, and sharks are brought to land before they are finned, millions of sharks are wasted simply because of the value the fin represents. The bodies are often discarded or sold as a low grade product.



Finning takes place all around the world.

Much like elephant ivory, rhino horn, and other endangered species products, the only way to end the trade is by not allowing the possession, sale, or trade of that product.

WHAT IS SHARK FIN SOUP?

Shark fin soup has been considered a symbol of wealth and a delicacy in China since the Ming Dynasty. It was a dish that only the Emperor and his guests would be served. Eventually wealthy families and business people in Hong Kong and other cities with Chinese populations would also serve it.

The popularity rose about 20 years ago when the Chinese middle class grew rapidly and with it the demand for luxury items. The soup has become a standard dish served to impress guests at banquets, business dinners and weddings. The demand is also expanding into other Asian countries and cities around the world that have larger Chinese communities. The top consumers of shark fin soup are China, Malaysia and Thailand

The result is that now millions of people want shark fin soup and that shark and ray populations are being decimated in every corner of the globe. And there is no shortage in eager suppliers as every country with a commercial fishing fleet is chasing the money made from fins.



Fins can bring in hundreds of dollars on the market, with the average being about \$450 per pound.

A bowl of soup can cost up to \$100.

WHY DO WE EMPHASIZE THE FIN TRADE?

- Sharks are critical to ocean health and function. The demand for shark fins remains one of the greatest threats to shark populations around the world.
- More than 70 shark species are at risk of extinction. This risk is highest for larger-bodied, shallow-water species, some of the most common species that end up in the fin trade.
- The fin trade is not the only impact on shark populations, but it is one of the leading causes of shark mortality and population declines.
- Although shark finning is illegal in the US waters, it still continues. As long as the product (shark fins) are allowed to be traded, there is incentive to continue finning.
- The most valuable parts of the shark are its fins. The high market value of shark fins is the incentive to fish at unsustainable rates and to continue “finning” whether it’s legal or not. A legal market for shark fins creates a pathway for illegal fins.

Scientists estimate between 100 to 273 million sharks are killed per year and the fins from up to 73 million sharks are sold for shark fin soup.



WHY IS IT OUR PROBLEM WHEN FINS ARE MOSTLY CONSUMED IN ASIAN COUNTRIES?

- The demand for shark fin soup greatly expanded beyond China and Taiwan and is now sold in many countries, including the United States.
- The US contributes to the supply and transport of shark fins. However, there are no verifiable, sustainably sourced shark fins in the marketplace. There is only one certified sustainable shark fishery in the world, spiny dogfish in the U.S.A; and the fins from this species are of little market value. Seafood Watch currently lists no source for shark in the U.S. Atlantic as a “best choice” and only lists two sources as secondary “good alternatives” for shark. For both alternatives, Seafood Watch assess that “the catch of at-risk or overfished species [including] sharks is a serious concern. In 2013, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, home of Seafood Watch, sponsored a bill that banned the sale of shark fins in California.



WHY IS THE IMPORT/EXPORT ISSUE SO COMPLICATED?

- There are large discrepancies between NOAA US import records and FAO records that report how much was exported to the US from other countries, which attests to the fact that systems for tracking fins are inefficient, at best. Most ports and airports have dissimilar codes they use to classify fins. Sometimes fins don't even have their own code and are just thrown in with general seafood.
- Raw and dried fins are usually shipped to Hong Kong or Taiwan for processing, and then re-exported to the countries that sell and prepare the soup. Because fins do not have to be immediately shipped, like fresh fish, fins can be unloaded, stockpiled, transported, packed, repacked and then transshipped through many ports before they reach their final destination. Keeping track of where fins came from and how they were taken is nearly impossible.



Fins from large shark species are highly desired for display purposes.

The same species are most likely to be on the endangered species list.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN FLORIDA?

- Today, the shark fin trade is illegal in 12 U.S. states and 3 territories (HI, CA, WA, OR, IL, NY, MA, MD, RI, DE, TX, NV, GUAM, CNMI, AMERICAN SAMOA), while it remains legal in Florida, with Miami being the largest import/export nexus in the U.S.
see this Miami Herald article: [Miami now nation's top importer of shark fins.](#)
- Although shark finning is illegal in U.S. waters (Shark Conservation Act of 2010), and in the State of Florida, the act is still occurring [Miami Herald - Butchered shark fins seized...](#)
- Another Miami Herald article explains the situation in the region in detail: "...Florida now ranks as the largest importer of shark fins in the country, according to Oceana. And shark fins from Central America often pass through Miami International Airport on their way to Hong Kong, according to data supplied by the private trade data aggregate ImportGenius. It wasn't always that way. For years, Los Angeles and then Houston were the transit hubs for Central American fins. But as Texas and California tightened restrictions, the exports moved to Florida. Between 2015 and the middle of 2017, Costa Rican companies alone moved 180,000 pounds of dried shark fins through MIA on their way to Asia using two small logistics companies. Those fins were valued at almost \$2.5 million dollars. It's nearly impossible to know if any of the shark fins flown through MIA were from endangered species.... (Read the complete article) ["War on Sharks - How rogue fishing fleets plunder the ocean's top predator."](#)

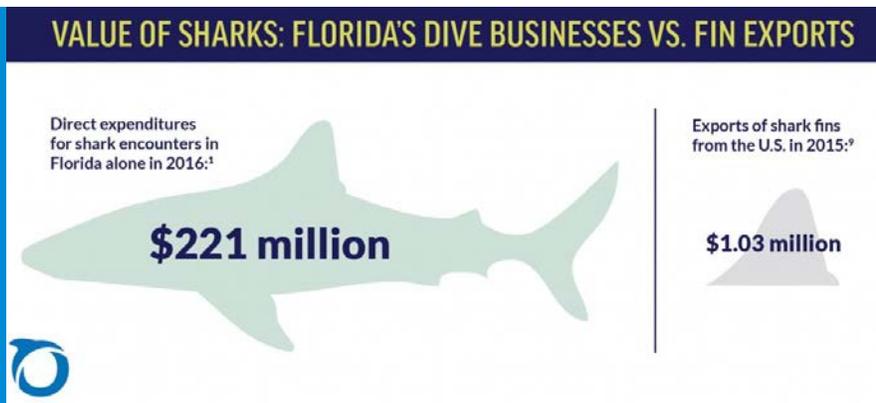
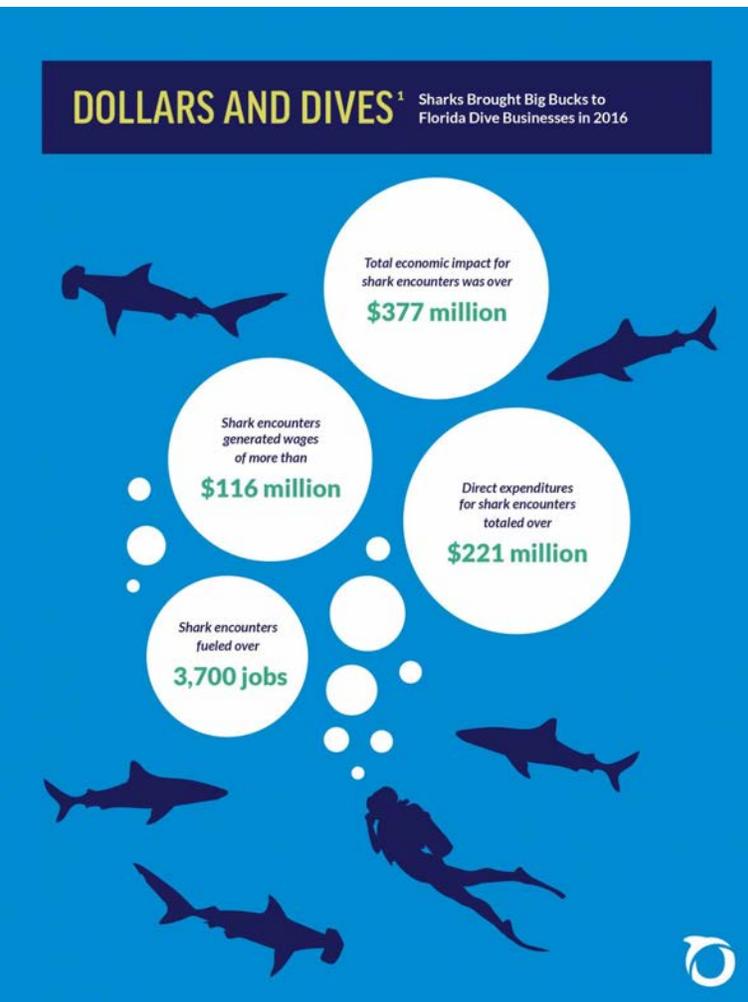
WHAT ABOUT RAYS?

- Fins from manta and mobile rays can enter the market as shark fins. Rays are also hunted for their gills. As with shark fins, the majority of ray gillrakers found in traditional medicine markets come from protected, endangered species and are illegal to trade under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), yet persist in the market-place. Evidence suggests that these products are part of the same international trade as shark fins.



SHARKS ARE GOOD FOR FLORIDA'S ECONOMY

- Dive ecotourism (including viewing sharks) brings in millions more revenue dollars than fishing does. Supporting healthy shark populations is the smart and right thing to do. An independent study commissioned by Oceana showed that the value of Florida shark diving in 2016 is more than 200 times the value of shark fin exports for the entire U.S. in 2015. (direct expenditures from shark encounters in Florida alone contributed \$221 million to the economy in 2016. The value of shark fin exports from the entire United States was a little more than \$1 million in 2015.)
- Rays, just like sharks, are popular with divers and are a major attraction that generates income through dive tourism.
- Sharks are a keystone species that are vitally important to maintain strong and healthy fish populations. They keep a very complex system in balance. This function is not only important for tourism, but for all industries that benefit from ocean resources. From a purely economic point of view, sharks are worth much more alive than the one time profit made from fins.



[Home](#) **CEANA** 2016 Economic Analysis
Clean Coast Economy report

| FISHING, TOURISM & RECREATION | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| All of Florida's coast: | support 609,899 JOBS | generate \$37.4 BILLION IN GDP |
| Atlantic coast: | 305,343 jobs | \$19.9 billion |
| Gulf coast: | 304,556 jobs | \$17.5 billion |

SHARK ALLIES HAS BEEN THERE FROM THE START

In 2010 landmark legislation was introduced by Hawaii State Senator Clayton Hee. It was the first of its kind - a prohibition on the sale, possession and trade of shark fins. We were fortunate to be part of his team and worked side by side in the development and advocacy for this bill. At the time, there wasn't much hope in the conservation world that this would have a chance of passing. But we persisted and Hawaii became the first State to pass such a law. The lessons we learned were invaluable and we were able to implement this approach in other regions.

The Hawaii law became model legislation for 12 other US states, 3 territories and many Pacific Island Nations.

WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS, BUT THE BATTLE CONTINUES

Along with the success, the opposition to fin bans has also grown.

As one State shuts down, the trade tends to move to the next. This is not a reason to give up. It simply means we have to persist. It is crucial that we do not let off the pressure and continue to block the trade in the key coastal US States as well as on a national level. It is time for Florida to make a move and take a stand against the trade of fins.

US STATES AND TERRITORIES THAT PASSED FIN TRADE LAWS SINCE 2010:

- Hawaii
- California
- Washington
- Oregon
- Illinois
- New York
- Massachusetts
- Maryland
- Rhode Island
- Delaware
- Texas
- Nevada
- Guam
- American Samoa
- CNMI



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BILL EXPLANATION

INTENTION OF THE BILLS:

- To stop the flow of fins coming through Florida ports of entry and therefore avoid supporting the global trade of fins.
- To stop the incentive for illegal finning. (No fin sales = no purpose for finning.)
- To reduce bycatch of sharks – due to the high value of fins, there is incentive to keep sharks that are accidentally caught and would otherwise be released. (As long as shark fins can be sold, it is less likely that commercial outfits will switch to methods and gear that help avoid catching sharks “accidentally”.)
- To close all channels for “legal” fins. The global trade is devastating shark populations. Participating in the harvest or sale of this product means you are inadvertently contributing to a market that is destroying an important resource for many industries as well as an animal that is important to the health of our oceans and fisheries.
- To make note of inclusion of Manta and Mobula rays, which are part of the shark family and often left out of fin legislation. They are equally hunted to extinction for their fins (and gill rakers) and traded through the same channels.
- To protect Florida’s natural marine resources, which draw millions of visitors each year and provide countless local and statewide economic benefits.

BILL EXPLANATION cont.

WHAT THE BILLS **WILL DO**:

- They will ban the commercial trade of fins and Manta/Mobula parts in Florida and through Florida's ports. Fins would only be allowed for personal use. No one would be allowed to enter fins into the marketplace or sell products made from fins.
- They will make Florida the 13th state to take a stand against the global shark fin trade. This is particularly important since Florida is currently the number one hub for the fin trade in the U.S.
- They will go beyond the existing prohibition on "finning". (By not prohibiting the sale and trade of fins we inadvertently continue to encourage "finning" whether it is legal or not.)
- Since there would be no legal pathway for the commercial trade of fins, they would dramatically simplify and make enforcement more effective because:
 - No special training is needed to identify shark fins;
 - No DNA testing is required to confirm species; and
 - No loopholes exist such as:
 - Sharks claimed to have been caught outside of state or federal jurisdictions,
 - Shark fins that are claimed as a permitted species but are in fact taken from rare and endangered species.



WHAT THE BILLS **WILL NOT DO**:

- They will not affect recreational or commercial fishing as long as you do not sell the fin or prepare it for sale in a product.
- They will not amend animal cruelty laws. It cannot be used to go after anyone that mistreats sharks in any manner.
- They will not compete or conflict with federal law. Federal law prohibits finning and requires sharks be landed whole.
- They will not prevent anyone from catching a shark and taking it home to eat it. Subsistence fishing is not prohibited.
- They will not prohibit catching sharks and retaining fins for bona fide shark research.

FLORIDA MEDIA RELATED TO FINNING AND SHARK FINS

Miami Herald War on sharks- How rogue fishing fleets plunder the ocean's top predator
<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article215598705.html>

Between 2015 and the middle of 2017, Costa Rican companies alone moved 180,000 pounds of dried shark fins through MIA on their way to Asia using two small logistics companies. Those fins were valued at almost \$2.5 million dollars. It's nearly impossible to know if any of the shark fins flown through MIA were from endangered species. But a 2017 independent analysis of shark fin clippings imported to Hong Kong suggests that a third of the fins may come from internationally protected species....."

Miami Herald – Butchered shark fins seized from shrimp boat off Key West <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article142029049.html>

Update: More than a year later, the case remains open with no charges filed.

Miami Herald – Miami now nation's top importer of shark fins.
<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article210157954.html>

Coast Guard busts Keys fishing vessel with shark fins
<https://www.miamiherald.com/latest-news/article213445294.html>

Keys Weekly – Ending the shark fin trade in the US
<https://keysweekly.com/42/ending-the-shark-fin-trade-in-the-u-s/>

Contact / Links

Website: SharkAllies.org

Fin campaign pages:

<https://www.sharkallies.com/ending-the-trade-of-shark-fins>

“Sign the declaration” pages:

<https://www.sharkallies.com/stop-shark-fin-trade-declaration>

Email: stefanie@sharkallies.com

Mailing address: PO Box 102, Venice CA 90294

Social pages: @SharkAllies

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