



Shark Regulations

A Guide to Commonwealth & Federal Rules for Fishers



WPCouncil.org

Commonwealth Waters

Shoreline to 3 nautical miles offshore

Federal U.S. Waters

3 to 200 nautical miles offshore (EEZ)

Shark Fishing

CNMI Law

PROHIBITED: Possessing, selling, offering, trading, or distributing any shark fins.

Shark finning (removing fins and discarding the shark) is banned.

- Exception - Possession of a whole shark is allowed for non-commercial subsistence purposes or with a DLNR permit.

*Prohibited: scalloped hammerhead shark

U.S. Federal Law

Fishing is allowed but regulated.

Sustainable harvest of certain species* (see back) is allowed if using approved gear and following rules for gear and area use.

- Sharks must be landed with fins still attached to the body.
- Nationwide ban on the possession, sale and trade of detached shark fins.

*Prohibited: oceanic whitetip shark, silky shark

What Does This Mean for Fishermen?

If you legally catch a shark in federal or commonwealth waters, you must land it with fins attached.

Shark Feeding

CNMI Law

PROHIBITED: Any shark feeding without permit.

- Exception – with a DLNR permit.

U.S. Federal Law

PROHIBITED: Any shark feeding activity.

- Exception - for the purpose of harvesting sharks, authorized activities or federally funded research.

This handout provides a simplified summary of regulations. For specifics, consult official statutes and regulations.

CNMI PL 17-27 (2011) – Possession/trade of shark fins prohibited

CNMI PL 15-124 § 5642 (2008) – Shark feeding prohibited

Magnuson-Stevens Act (1976) – 16 U.S.C. §§ 1801 et seq.

Endangered Species Act (1973) – 16 U.S.C. §§ 1531 et seq.

Shark Finning Prohibition Act (2000) – Pub. L. 106–557

Shark Conservation Act (2010) – 16 U.S.C. §§ 1857, 1859, 1866, 1869

Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act (2023) – Pub. L. 118–28

Fed. Regulations – 50 CFR §§ 600.1200, 665.800 et seq.

Managed shark species in WPRFMC Marianas/Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plans (ok to land)

www.wpcouncil.org/fishery-ecosystem-plans-amendments



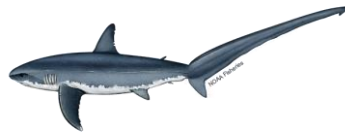
bigeye thresher



blacktip reef



blue



common thresher



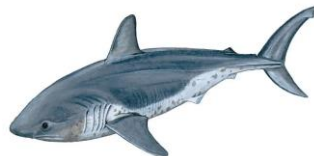
Galápagos



gray reef



longfin mako



salmon



shortfin mako



silvertip



tiger



whitetip reef

Less common species include: bramble, hammerhead, lemon, leopard, mackerel, pelagic thresher, spiny dogfish, white

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/sharks/hawaii-sharks/shark-identification-guide>

Images: CSIRO, Marc Dando, DLNR, Guidesly.com, NMFS

**Retention prohibited
due to international
agreements:**



oceanic whitetip



scalloped hammerhead



silky

Fishery management in U.S. federal waters is governed primarily by the **Magnuson-Stevens Act (1976)**. The act requires that all fishery management plans meet 10 National Standards. That means the approximately 50 species of sharks managed in federal waters are fished under rules designed to:

- ✓ Prevent overfishing
- ✓ Rebuild overfished stocks
- ✓ Increase long-term economic and social benefits of fisheries
- ✓ Ensure a safe and sustainable seafood supply

For more info:

info@wpcouncil.org

(808) 522-8220

WPCouncil.org