



Shark Regulations

A Guide to State & Federal Rules for Fishers



WPCouncil.org

State Waters (Hawai'i)

Shoreline to 3 nautical miles offshore

Federal U.S. Waters

3 to 200 nautical miles offshore (EEZ)

Shark Fishing

Hawai'i State Law

PROHIBITED: Knowingly capturing, entangling or killing any shark.

Shark fin possession/trade is banned.

- Accidental catches must be released quickly and safely.
- Exception - DLNR may issue permits for scientific, cultural or public safety purposes.

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 waters, you must land it with fins attached. Once on shore in Hawai'i, you need to remove and discard the fins to comply with the state and federal fin possession ban.

Shark Feeding

Hawai'i State Law

PROHIBITED: Any shark feeding activity.

- Exception - DLNR may issue permits for cultural or religious purposes.

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.

HRS § 188-40.6 (2002) – Shark feeding prohibited

HRS § 188-40.7 (2010) – Possession/trade of shark fins prohibited

HRS § 188-40.8 (2021) – Take, kill or capture of sharks 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 Hawai'i/Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plans (ok to land)

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



bigeye thresher



blacktip reef



blue



common thresher



Galápagos



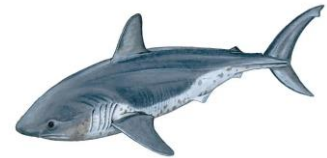
gray reef



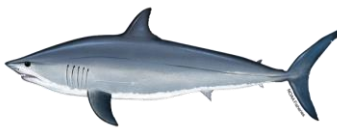
longfin mako



pelagic thresher



salmon



shortfin mako



silvertip



whitetip reef

Potentially Harvested Species (requires special coral reef ecosystem permit)

Carcharhinidae spp. (other requiem sharks not listed above)

Sphyrnidae spp. (hammerheads)

<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



silky

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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