

SPECIES MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

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FISHERIES AND CITES

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CITES Parties at COP13 will consider proposals to list the Humphead Wrasse and Great White Shark on Appendix II, look at cooperation with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and assess the work of the Animals Committee on sharks and sea cucumbers, which are presently not listed.

The degree to which commercial fisheries can be adequately managed through CITES is of concern to many Parties because of the implementation problems that arise. Species Management Specialists (SMS) believes that expertise related to fisheries and fisheries management lies outside of CITES and within the FAO and other specialised organisations. The Parties to CITES have widely accepted that FAO should be consulted about amendment proposals concerning commercial marine fish species. Prior to COP13, FAO established an ad hoc Expert Advisory Panel to evaluate the amendment proposals for marine fish species (Humphead Wrasse; Great White Shark) submitted to this COP.

In the case of the Humphead Wrasse, the FAO Expert Panel supported the listing on Appendix II, concluding that trade regulation as a result of listing could make a contribution to conservation of the species.

The Expert Panel could not confirm or exclude the possibility that the Great White Shark met the criteria for listing in Appendix II, and that there was insufficient information to assess the relative importance of international trade to the conservation status of this species. On the basis of available information, SMS believes that the argument that demand for trade is causing a decline in Great White Shark numbers is at best poor – and at worst scientifically flawed.

Regarding the shark proposal, other historical decisions also need to be considered. COP9 (Fort Lauderdale, 1994) adopted Resolution Conf. 9.17 on the biological and trade status of sharks, in which the primary role of FAO is acknowledged. As a direct result of Resolution Conf. 9.17, FAO developed the IPOA-Sharks and initiated a process for its implementation through the adoption of national plans-of-action for sharks.

COP13 Doc 35 on “Conservation and Management of Sharks” confirms that considerable progress has been made by range states, even though much remains to be done. SMS is concerned that ignoring this process and listing the Great White Shark regardless of whether it meets the criteria is counterproductive and has the potential to detract from the efforts of FAO members to fully implement the IPOA-Sharks and achieve improved management of the fishery.

At the Standing Committee meeting, Australia was outspoken in its criticism of FAO, the CITES Standing Committee Chairman, and the process through which an MOU between CITES and FAO was being advanced. Australia’s views were not strongly endorsed by other Parties.

SMS holds the view that expertise in fisheries management resides with the FAO – not CITES. In this regard, SMS urges Parties, in the spirit of enhanced synergy and cooperation with FAO, to consider the long-term objective of FAO involvement in shark management and reject the proposal to include the Great White Shark in Appendix II.

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Finally, unless Parties demonstrate this acceptance of FAO expert advice, a proposed MOU with FAO would have little purpose.