

OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK *Carcharhinus longimanus*

Proposed by Brazil, Colombia and the United States. Inclusion of *Carcharhinus longimanus* in Appendix II in accordance with Article II paragraph 2(a) of the Convention and satisfying Criterion A in Annex 2a of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15). Inclusion in Appendix II with the following annotation: "The entry into effect of the inclusion of *Carcharhinus longimanus* in Appendix II will be delayed by 18 months to enable Parties to resolve the related technical and administrative issues."

RECOMMENDATION : SUPPORT

The oceanic whitetip shark was once one of the most widely distributed and abundant shark species in all tropical and subtropical oceans from 42°N to 35°S, usually found far offshore or in areas with narrow continental shelves¹.

One of the most slow-growing sharks, the oceanic whitetip also has small litters².

The species has suffered drastic declines. Populations of oceanic whitetip sharks have declined by >99% in the Gulf of Mexico³, 60% to 70% in the northwest and central Atlantic Ocean^{4,5}. And up to a 10-fold decline in abundance from the baseline in the central Pacific Ocean⁶.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists the species as Vulnerable globally on their Red List of Threatened Species, and has assessed the species as Critically Endangered in the Northwest and Western Central Atlantic⁷.

THREATS TO OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARKS

The threats to the species are bycatch in pelagic longline and drift net fisheries for swordfish and tuna, and the unsustainable harvest for the international fin trade⁸.

There is evidence that international trade is driving retention of bycatch⁹. A large proportion of oceanic whitetip sharks taken on longlines are alive when brought to the vessel and could be released alive, however, their low value carcasses are usually discarded and the high-value fins are retained¹⁰.

THE FINS OF OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARKS ARE VISUALLY IDENTIFIABLE

The large rounded white tipped fins of the species are easily identifiable and one of the most common shark fins in trade^{11,12}.

OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARKS MEET THE CRITERIA FOR LISTING ON APPENDIX II

Both the current FAO Expert Advisory Panel and the previous one concluded that the oceanic whitetip shark meets the biological criteria for listing on CITES Appendix II. "Importantly, new information from the first-ever full stock assessment conducted (in 2012) for oceanic whitetip for the Western and Central Pacific area corroborated and reinforced this conclusion."¹³



Two regional studies provide long time series (45–50 years) that show historical extents of decline conforming to the Appendix II decline criterion, and a short (10 years) recent time series in one area also shows a historical extent of decline consistent with the Appendix II decline criterion¹⁴.

Because the population declines of the oceanic whitetip shark are in large part a result of international trade the species qualifies for listing on Appendix II.

Photo credits: Vincent Canabal, Bill Fisher and Marty Snyderman

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Oceanic whitetip sharks have significant value to the tourism industry,