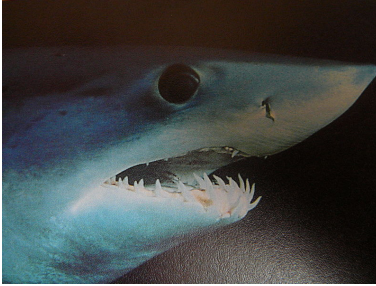


1 March 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

Image: Close up of Shortfin Mako
Credit: Wikipedia Commons



Recreational fishers welcome Garrett's decision.

Australian recreational fishers today welcomed the decision by The Hon. Peter Garrett, Federal Minister for the Environment to allow the sustainable fishing of Mako Sharks to continue.

On Thursday 25 February, Minister Garrett tabled a bill to amend the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to allow sustainable recreational fishing for Mako and Porbeagle Sharks to continue. Under the *EPBC Act*, Mako Sharks and Porbeagle Sharks are listed migratory species and the amendment will grant an exemption to recreational fishers to continue to fish for these iconic gamefish.

Recfish CEO Len Olyott said that the exemption recognised that recreational fishing for Makos and Porbeagles was a sustainable activity which posed no threat to their conservation. "Existing limits that apply to the capture of these species are extremely conservative. Most are tagged and released with subsequent recaptures providing essential scientific evidence to assist in the further conservation of these shark species." Olyott added that Recfish Australia was committed to the conservation of all aquatic species and will be working closely with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and the recreational fishing community to ensure that information continues to be collected to assist in the conservation of these and many other species.

This sentiment was echoed by Grahame Williams, President of the Game Fishing Association of Australia. "Our Association has a long history of supporting scientific research on gamefish species. 87% of Makos caught by gamefishers are tagged and released. Our tournaments are also run under a strict Code of Conduct."

Conservation groups have accused the government of caving in to a vocal minority and reneging on international commitments to conserve migratory species.

"Both Mako species and Porbeagle Sharks are still listed as migratory species under the *EPBC Act*. The international listing (*Appendix II of the Bonn Convention*) recognizes that conservation measures are necessary but does not require the parties to ban fishing. This is an unfortunate and unintentional oversight of the *EPBC Act* which an independent review has suggested needs amending. The government acknowledges that and this is why this exemption has been granted. Any inferences from conservation extremists that recreational fishing isn't helping to conserve these and many other shark species are simply mischievous."

Given only weeks to respond to the listing, peak bodies including Recfish Australia, the Gamefishing Association of Australia, the Australian National Sportfishing Association, the Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing, Victoria's peak recreational body (VRFish) and the Boating and Fishing Council of Australia worked closely in a combined effort to convince the minister and senior departmental staff to explore options to allow sustainable game and sportfishing to continue.

There is no doubt that the overwhelming united response from the recreational fishing industry sends a clear message to the government that recreational fishing is a vital part of our Australian heritage and that Australia's 4 million recreational fishers will not accept decisions that lack scientific credibility or common sense.

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