

New Zealand Big Game Fishing Council

(Incorporated)

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NZ Big Game Fishing Council Submission on the Introduction of Sevengill Sharks to the QMS

NZ Big Game Fishing Council

1. The NZ Big Game Fishing Council (NZBGFC) was formed in 1957 to act as an umbrella group for sport fishing clubs and to organise a tournament that would attract anglers from around the world. Club membership has grown steadily and we now represent over 30,000 members in 60 clubs spread throughout NZ. We still run the nation-wide fishing tournament, which has evolved over time and remains successful.
2. NZBGFC compile and publish the New Zealand records for fish caught in saltwater by recreational anglers and are members of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) who publish catches that qualify as recreational world records.
3. In 1996 the NZBGFC helped establish the NZ Marine Research Foundation, which aims to sponsor research on marine species and fisheries, for the benefit of all New Zealanders, including participants in ocean recreation.
4. Many of our most established fishing clubs have a focus on fishing for large pelagic species such as marlin, tuna, and sharks. In recent years our membership has expanded beyond the traditional deep sea angling clubs to include many local clubs targeting inshore species.

Background

5. MFish has released a discussion document proposing that two species of sevengill shark be introduced to the QMS in 2008. Following the receipt of submissions, MFish will prepare Initial Position Papers (IPPs) for those species if QMS introduction appears to be necessary.

6. The paper also suggests that the following species not be introduced into the Quota Management System (QMS) bellowsfish, capro dory, hagfish, lamprey, scabbardfish, silver dory, mirror dory and seahorse.
7. MFish propose that the statutory considerations as to whether a stock or species may be introduced to the QMS are:
 - Whether existing management is maintaining the potential of the stock to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations;
 - Whether existing management avoids, remedies or mitigates any adverse effects of fishing on the aquatic environment;
 - Whether existing management provides access that enables social, cultural and economic well-being.
8. There are two species proposed for introduction to the QMS the broadnosed sevengill shark, which grows to a maximum size of approximately 3 m, has a maximum published weight of 107 kg, and a maximum reported age of 49 years. Young are born live with 82-95 pups in a litter. Fishers have observed large aggregations of these sharks in shallow waters during summer and it is possible that these are breeding groups. They are found from Northland to Stewart Island, in depths of 0-570m. Broadnosed sevengill sharks feed on other sharks, rays, bony fish, dolphins and porpoises, seals, and mammalian carrion like sheep. Hector's dolphin tails and body parts have been found in the stomachs of this species. They are taken as a bycatch in inshore setnet and trawl fisheries.
9. The other species is the sharpnosed sevengill which are smaller and live deeper (300 to 1000 metres). They are widely distributed, occurring in all tropical and temperate seas. It is a bycatch of deep water trawlers with an annual reported catch of about 1.5 tonnes. However, it appears that the weight of fins is often wrongly declared as the greenweight. Sharpnosed sevengill currently has 'Near Threatened' Status on the IUCN Red list of threatened species (2006).

NZBGFC Submission

10. The broadnosed sevengill shark only occasionally appears in NZBGFC club records but our members have an interest in all large shark species and their management. A sevengill shark caught in the Manukau Harbour holds the current IGFA All Tackle world record for this species. This was a 32.8 kg fish caught in 1995. IGFA do not keep line class records for these sharks.
11. Sevengill sharks are caught by land-based fishers in the South Island. Some fishers target them in competitions as often they are the largest fish available. There is an amateur bag limit in the southern region of one fish per day.
12. There should be advantages in having the tools within the QMS for more active management of these species. In particular more accurate reporting of green weight for this species is required. Reporting of landed catch by fishers is required as an integral part of monitoring catch against quota (or annual catch entitlement, ACE).
13. As with other shark species in the QMS, sevengills should be placed on the Sixth Schedule of the Fisheries Act. This allows commercial fishers to return the shark to the sea provided it is likely to survive on return, and that this is done as soon as practicable after it has been landed. This means that all dead sevengill sharks will have to be kept and reported, something that may not be happening as a non-QMS species.

14. If sevengill sharks are introduced to the QMS then quotas should be set to cover the quantity taken as bycatch only. Our members do not support the development of a target fishery for sevengill sharks, particularly as the most valuable product from these fish is the fins with the rest of the fish used as fish meal or dumped. We support these species being placed on the Third Schedule of the Fisheries Act to allow the Minister to set quotas at bycatch only levels.
15. The introduction of sevengill sharks to the QMS will require a 20% allocation of the TACC to Te Ohu Kai Moana. This will further increase the value of Maori commercial holdings, which have appreciated in value significantly on the last 10 years.
16. Whether sevengill sharks are introduced to the QMS or not, there needs to be legislation to prevent the slaughter of sharks for their fins and the dumping of the rest of the body. Many sharks are slow growing with low reproductive rates, making them susceptible to overfishing and rapid population declines. Members of the NZBGFC are very concerned about the sharp decline in pelagic shark numbers in the late 1990s. Most pelagic sharks caught by recreational fishers are tagged and released. The annual report of the cooperative gamefish tagging programme shows in the mid 1990s up to 1700 mako and blue sharks were tagged per year by recreational anglers. In recent years the total has declined to around 300 tagged per year¹.
17. There is concern world wide about the dwindling number of sharks. Many countries have introduced policies requiring fishers to keep the bodies of sharks that are finned or requiring fishers to remove fins only after they have returned to port. The practice of finning sharks and discarding the rest is wasteful and at times inhumane.
18. New Zealand is a signatory to the FAO International Plan for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks) that require a precautionary approach to management, and to minimize waste and discards from shark catches and promote their full use through measures including bans on finning.
19. MFish state in the IPP that a national plan of action (NPOA) for sharks has been developed. We would expect this to be in line with the international plan of action (IPOA-Sharks) which aims to:
 - *Ensure that shark catches from directed and non-directed fisheries are sustainable;*
 - *Assess threats to shark populations, determine and protect critical habitats and implement harvesting strategies consistent with the principles of biological sustainability and rational long-term economic use;*
 - *Identify and provide special attention, in particular to vulnerable or threatened shark stocks;*
 - *Improve and develop frameworks for establishing and coordinating effective consultation involving all stakeholders in research, management and educational initiatives within and between States;*
 - *Minimize unutilized incidental catches of sharks;*
 - *Contribute to the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem structure and function;*
 - ***Minimize waste and discards from shark catches in accordance with article 7.2.2.(g) of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (for example, requiring the retention of sharks from which fins are removed);***
 - ***Encourage full use of dead sharks;***
 - *Facilitate improved species-specific catch and landings data and monitoring of shark catches;*
 - *Facilitate the identification and reporting of species-specific biological and trade data.*²
20. Restrictions on the practice of shark finning have been implemented in the European Union, the United States of America, Canada and Australia. Other smaller Pacific states and

¹ Holdsworth & Saul 2007. New Zealand billfish and gamefish tagging 2005–06. FAR 2007/2. Table 1.

² Implementation of the IPOA-sharks, section 7. FAO website

territories including American Samoa have also banned shark finning. New Zealand is increasingly out of line with other countries.

21. The NZBGC does not support finning of sharks at sea. The Ministry of Fisheries should ensure that New Zealand fishing practices are brought into line with international best practice and market expectations.

Summary

22. NZBGFC supports the introduction of both sevengill shark species into the QMS. This should ensure more active management of these species and better reporting of actual catch.
23. Another benefit of introduction will be the allocation of 20% of quota to Maori fishing interests.
24. NZBGFC supports the inclusion of sevengill shark species on the Third Schedule of the Fisheries Act to allow the Minister to set quotas at bycatch only levels.
25. NZBGFC supports the inclusion of sevengill shark species on the Sixth Schedule of the Fisheries Act to allow commercial fishers to return these sharks to the sea provided they are likely to survive and that this is done as soon as practicable after they have been landed.
26. The NZBGC is strongly opposed to the finning of sharks. The NZBGFC urges the Ministry of Fisheries to take heed of our international obligations and developments in other nations, and ban the retention of fins and the discard of the rest of the shark. This will provide an incentive for fishers to fully utilize their shark bycatch, or release it alive

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views on the management of sevengill and other sharks.

Jeff Romeril
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