INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

102nd MEETING

Panama City, Panama
2-6 September 2024

PROPOSAL IATTC-102 H-3

SUBMITTED BY CANADA

TO AMMEND RESOLUTION C-23-07

CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

In 2022, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Convention (IATTC) staff conducted a review of available literature, knowledge, research and data relevant to the development of best handling and release practices (BHRP) guidance (EB-01-01). The document reviewed the current vulnerable species Resolutions (e.g., C-05-02) to identify where BHRP guidelines can be implemented into the regulations and where additional research is required in the IATTC Convention area of the eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). The paper was presented to the IATTC's 1st permanent Working Group on Ecosystem and Bycatch (EBWG; Res. C-22-06) and the 14th Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting (SAC-14-16). Accordingly, SAC 14 (May 15-19, 2023) endorsed the EBWG 1 (May 11-12, 2023) recommendation that: a) the development of BHRP guidelines for vulnerable species are addressed and, b) CPCs and other relevant stakeholders support the IATTC staff in a survey to gather details of national efforts or programs that can help elucidate post-release survival rates of vulnerable species captured in the various fisheries under the purview of the IATTC.

In recognition of the above recommendations, the 101st Commission adopted Resolution C-23-07 on sharks, including paragraph 12 which says 'the IATTC scientific staff, in collaboration with the IATTC SAC and EBWG, shall develop and recommend to the Commission a set of best handling guidelines for the safe release of sharks for inclusion in this measure in 2024'.

To meet these requirements, a Memorandum was sent by the Director of the IATTC to all CPCs (Reference: 0473-410) requesting information on any existing guidelines or regulations on BHRP for vulnerable species and existing data that elucidates the post-release fate of marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles, sharks, and rays for tuna and tuna-like fisheries under the purview of the IATTC. This memorandum also requested that Members and Cooperating non-Members identify and designate subject matter experts that could potentially assist the IATTC staff with the development of the guidelines referred to above for each taxa and fishery. Following the request made under Resolution C-23-07 paragraph 12, a paper representing all the necessary background, context, and scientific evidence to support the proposed draft BHRP guidelines (SAC-15-11) was put forward for consideration at the 2nd EBWG and 15th SAC meetings.

Canada is concerned with the status of shark populations, noting that these are generally vulnerable to the threat of fishing induced mortality, including incidental capture and entanglement. Life history characteristics such as longevity, late age-at-maturity and low fecundity make it difficult for shark populations to recover in abundance after depletion. Safe handling guidelines positively contribute to the

post release survivability - particularly for purse seine fisheries where research has shown that survival rates of entangled sharks can be high (80-84%) when best handling and release practices are used.

As such, Canada proposes to replace Paragraph 11 with the requirement for CPCs to ensure their vessels implement, to the extent practicable and taking due consideration of the safety of persons on board, the best handling and release practices for sharks.

Canada also recommends deleting Paragraph 12 as it would be no longer necessary with the adoption of a set of best handling and release guidelines.

Finally, Canada developed a new set of guidelines in Annex 3 ALT, based on the existing safe handling and release requirements reflected in Paragraph 11 and Annex 3 of Resolution 23-07; the recommendations put forward by the IATTC Scientific Staff at the 2nd EBWG and 15th SAC meetings; and by attempting to take into consideration concerns raised by CPCs earlier this year.

Canada recommends that the Commission adopt these amendments to fulfill IATTCs commitment in Paragraph 12 of Resolution C-23-07.

RESOLUTION C-24-XX AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION C-23-07 CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS

[....]

BYCATCH AND RELEASE

10. CPCs shall prohibit vessels targeting tuna and/or swordfish from using buoy lines.

~~11. All sharks (alive or dead) that are not retained must be promptly released unharmed, to the extent practicable, as soon as they are see on the line, entangled in the net, or brailed on the deck, taking due consideration of the safety of any persons using the following procedures:~~

11 alt. CPCs shall require vessels flying their flag to implement, to the extent practicable and taking due consideration of the safety of persons on board, the best handling and release practices for sharks, as provided under Annex 3 of this Resolution. Revisions to Annex 3 may be considered by the Commission as new information from the EBWG and SAC becomes available.

~~For purse seine vessels:~~

~~a. when seen entangled in the net, disentangle the sharks and release them into the ocean as soon as possible.~~

~~b. sharks brailed on deck must be returned to the water as soon as possible, either utilizing a ramp from the deck connecting to an opening on the side of the vessel, or through escape hatches. If ramps or escape hatches are not available, the sharks must be lowered with a sling or cargo net, using a crane or similar equipment, or as indicated in Annex 3 or any future revisions, as identified pursuant to paragraph 12.~~

~~c. prohibit the use of gaffs, hooks, or similar instruments for the handling of sharks.~~

~~d. prohibit the lifting of sharks by the head, tail, gill slits, or spiracles, or by using bind wire against or inserted through the body. Prohibit the punching of holes through the bodies of sharks (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the shark).~~

~~e. prohibit the lifting of whale sharks (Rhincodon typus) onboard the vessel and prohibit the towing of whale sharks out of a purse seine net, e.g., using towing ropes.~~

~~For longline vessels:~~

~~f. leave the shark in the water, where possible.~~

~~g. use a line cutter to cut the branchline as close to the hook as possible, and so that less than 1 meter remains on the animal, to the extent practicable.~~

~~12. The IATTC scientific staff, in collaboration with the IATTC SAC and EBWG, shall develop and recommend to the Commission a set of best handling guidelines for the safe release of sharks for inclusion in this measure in 2024. In the meantime, CPCs may elect to, as appropriate, use the safe handling and release guidelines for purse seine vessels described in Annex 3.~~

Annex 3 ALT

Best safe handling and release practices for sharks

The primary aim of these best handling and release practices (BHRPs) is to ensure the highest level of post-release survival of sharks, while taking due consideration of the safety of those on board.

To maximize efficacy and utility of adopted BHRPs, CPCs must ensure fleets are educated and trained on these requirements regularly, have access to illustrated guidelines available in the languages spoken by the crews, and are to be clearly posted on the vessels. CPCs must also require vessels to carry the necessary BHRP tools.

General recommendations for all fisheries and specific recommendations for both longline and purse-seine fisheries are included below:

FOR ALL FISHERIES

RECOMMENDED TOOLS

- Gloves (shark skin is rough; this ensures safe handling of the shark and protects crew members' hands from bites).
- Towel or cloth (a towel or cloth soaked in seawater can be placed over the shark's eyes to calm it down).
- Dehooking devices (for example, pigtail dehooker, bolt cutter or pliers).
- Shark harness or stretcher (if necessary).
- Saltwater hose (if anticipated that it may take more than 5 minutes to release a shark, place a hose in the shark's mouth so that moderate amounts of seawater flow in. Make sure the deck pump has been running several minutes before placing it in the shark's mouth).
- Measuring device (for example, mark a pole, leader and float, or a measuring tape).
- Data sheet for recording all catches.
- Tagging equipment (if applicable).

DO

- Leave the shark in the water and remove as much gear as possible.
- Encourage immediate release.

DO NOT

- Leave sharks on deck, exposed to sun or air for extended periods of time.
- Pull or drag sharks by the tail or the caudal peduncle.
- Drag sharks behind the vessel.
- Lift by the head, tail, gill slits, or spiracles, or by using bind wire against or inserted through the body, and no holes may be punched through the bodies of sharks (e.g., to pass a cable through for lifting the shark).
- Strike sharks against the surface.
- Cut any part of, or punch holes through the shark.

FOR PURSE SEINE FISHERIES

Encourage CPCs to avoid shark interactions and develop strategies for removing sharks from the net while it is open, and they are still free-swimming.

RECOMMENDED TOOLS:

- Bycatch sorting/releasing devices for working/main deck (e.g., hopper with a door, ramp)
- Stretcher/cradle

DO

For sharks entangled in the net:

- Maneuver the animal into a stretcher/cradle or ramp immediately and release it on the opposite side of the vessel.
- Use a stretcher or cradle to ensure the safety of the crew and the animal.

For sharks that are on top of the sack:

- When sharks are visible on top of the sack, the vessel should conduct a 'skimming scoop' to move as many sharks as possible from the sack to the sea (if possible) or the main deck for immediate release.

When brailing sharks on board:

- Utilize bycatch sorting devices (e.g., hoppers) to ensure sharks are sorted on the main deck and do not go down the loading hatch.
- Maneuver sharks into a stretcher/cradle or ramp immediately and release it on the opposite side of the vessel.
- Vessels should install a bycatch/waste chute on the lower decks to facilitate faster and safer release of sharks that were not sorted on the main/working deck.

DO NOT

- Roll sharks through the power block.

FOR LONGLINE FISHERIES

RECOMMENDED TOOLS:

- Dipnet.
- Short or long handled de-hooker
- Line cutter.

DO

For sharks captured by vessels with high freeboard (>2m):

- Slow the vessel to bring the sharks in.
- Leave sharks in the water and remove gear.
- Use de-hookers if attempting to remove hooks.
- Use line cutters to cut the line as close to the hook or mouth as possible leaving no more than 1 meter of gear attached and ensuring that weights are removed.

For sharks captured by vessels with low freeboard (<2m):

- Slow the vessel to bring the sharks in.
- Leave sharks in the water and remove gear.
- If animals are brought on board for gear removal use a dip net or lasso to help lift them onboard.
- If animals are brought on board for gear removal use a stretcher or cradle to improve safety of the crew and to reduce injury to the animal.
- If animals are brought on board for gear removal, sharks should be maneuvered using manual restraint of the pectoral fins and the caudal peduncle (this may require two crew members depending on the size of the animal).

DO NOT:

For all vessels:

- Lift sharks onto the deck without the use of a dipnet and or second point of attachment to support the weight of the animal.
- Attempt to remove a hook if it is not visible.
- Cut into the jaw for removal of the hook.

FOR WHALE SHARKS

DO:

- Leave whale sharks in the water.
- Prioritize release of whale sharks prior to brailing.
- If the head of the whale shark is pointed towards the bow of the boat. The crew in charge of the net hauling operation can maneuver the winch and the capstan to bring the whale shark close to the hull, then stand the animal on the net and roll it outside the bunt.
- A rope placed under the animal and attached to the float line could help to roll the whale shark out of the net.

DO NOT:

- Land a whale shark on deck regardless of size.
- Start a brailing process when a whale shark is still in the net.
- Pull or drag whale sharks out of the net by the tail or caudal peduncle.