

ADDENDUM 1
In-Session Version

SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL COMMENTS

(arising from ScC-SC4)

**PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF
THE OCEANIC WHITE-TIP SHARK (*Carcharhinus longimanus*)
IN APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION
UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.27.1.8**

ScC-SC4 Agenda Item 11.1.8

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COP13

- The Council did not support the proposal in its current form. However, it concluded that the most recent assessments by the IUCN-Shark Specialist Group for this species indicate declines of a magnitude that would warrant a higher IUCN listing (see also the review by the AC of the Sharks MoU; UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC4/Inf.4). Such information would be expected to be included in the revised IUCN Red List assessment due to be released in December 2019, and would then indicate that the species would meet the listing criteria for “Endangered” for Appendix I. The Council recommended that the proposal be revised to include this latest information, which will be publicly available in the near future.
- The meeting concluded that the information currently included in the proposal did not provide sufficient evidence that the listing criteria (a) “Endangered” and (b) for “migratory” was ~~ere~~ being met at the global scale. However, it was recognized that some populations did demonstrate a migratory nature and these populations could benefit from further focus.;
- The Council also noted that lack of information on migration likely reflects insufficient scientific research on this species in many parts of its range.
- The Council recommended that the proposal should be augmented to provide additional information, specifically regarding the listing criteria.
- It was noted that the proponent may wish to incorporate some of the advice provided by the Sharks MOU Advisory Committee and updated IUCN Red List Assessments in its review of the proposal (see Inf.4);
- The Council recommended that the proponent explain the additional value of including the species in CMS Appendix I, bearing in mind that it was already listed in CITES Appendix II and that all tRFMOs prohibit retention;
- The Council recommended that the proponent may consider reducing the scope of the proposal to include regional populations, for which sufficient information was available to support the listing criteria.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE DOCUMENT

The ScC-SC4 expressed its general disappointment about the fact that Range States of the proposed species, were not consulted in advance of the submission of the proposal to CMS COP13.

Conservation status:

The Council noted that the Oceanic White-tip is currently assessed by IUCN as Vulnerable on a global scale.

The Council pointed out that a species assessed as ‘Vulnerable’ or ‘Near Threatened’ would not normally be considered for listing in CMS Appendix I unless there was substantive information subsequent to the IUCN Red List assessment that provided evidence of deteriorating conservation status, and information about the conservation benefits that an Appendix I listing would bring.

It was noted that at a regional level, the Northwest and Central Atlantic populations were considered Critically Endangered.

However, the Council noted that the IUCN was currently in the process of reassessing the status of the species and that it was likely that the species would be “uplisted” to “Endangered”.

It was mentioned that the species was subject to extensive management measures across the world, including through all tRFMOS, which prohibit the retention of the species and through the listing in CITES Appendix II.

It was mentioned that WCPFC saw a reasonable chance that the species may go extinct in the region despite the prohibition of its retention on board and that a CMS Appendix I-listing would raise the status of the species and would encourage Parties to undertake more conservation measures.

The Council welcomed the comprehensive review of the proposal and additional information provided by the Sharks MOU Advisory Committee (AC) ([available in Inf.4](#)). The AC came to the following conclusion regarding the conservation status of the species:

“The current IUCN Red List assessment still lists Oceanic Whitetip Shark as Vulnerable (Baum et al., 2015), although this is based on an earlier (2006) assessment. An updated assessment is expected to be published on 5 December 2019. The AC also considered a recent stock assessment for oceanic whitetip shark for the Indo-Pacific region (Tremblay Boyer et al., 2019). The assessment determined the depletion of the spawning biomass has declined by more than 95% and the “population should go extinct on the long-term under current levels of fishing mortality”.

A recent US National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) review by Young et al. (2018) provides an up-to-date synthesis on the status of Oceanic Whitetip Shark, including an Extinction Risk Analysis. Whilst this review “did not make recommendations as to whether the oceanic whitetip shark should be listed as threatened or endangered”, the ERA team stated that “the once abundant and ubiquitous oceanic whitetip shark has likely experienced significant historical population declines throughout its global range, with multiple data sources and analyses, including a stock assessment and trends in relative abundance, suggesting declines in excess of 80% in most areas”.

Migratory status:

The Council questioned whether the species meets the CMS definition for “migratory”, which requires that the species cyclically and predictably crosses one or more national jurisdictional boundaries. It was recognised that the species is highly mobile and widespread, but there was not much scientific evidence available demonstrating predictable and cyclical movements.

It was discussed that genetic work demonstrated distinct population structures in the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean as well as in the Western Atlantic and Indo-Pacific, although it was also noted that genetic isolation does not necessarily indicate lack of migration.

The Council noted that the lack of genetic evidence for migration indicated that separate

conservation and management of this species in each of its relevant regions may be appropriate and that a regional listing for the Critically Endangered populations in the Northwest and Central Atlantic may be more appropriate, if evidence of migration can be provided in that area.

The proposal provides evidence of migrations across national jurisdictional boundaries within each of the various parts of their biogeographic range and it is a logical assumption this is for a significant portion of the population. Cyclical or predictable migratory patterns were not documented in the proposal. However, there is evidence of cyclical and predictable movements of oceanic whitetip sharks from archival satellite tagging studies in the Bahamas (see Howey-Jordan et al. 2013). Oceanic whitetip sharks emigrate from the central Bahamas to southern Caribbean waters and the US east coast beginning around May but return to the central Bahamas the following January.

The Council noted the information provided by the Sharks MOU Advisory Committee (AC) ([available in Inf.4](#)) regarding the migratory behavior of the species:

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