



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

Governor Cuomo Signs Legislation to Prohibit the Sale and Possession of Shark Fins

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Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today signed legislation that will make it illegal to possess, sell, or distribute a shark fin in New York State.

“Every year, an estimated 73 million sharks are killed to supply the growing global demand for their fins,” Governor Cuomo said. “Not only is the process inhumane, but it also affects the natural balance of the oceanic ecosystem. With this new law, New York will be doing its part to help preserve this important species and maintain a stable environment for them.”

Under current law, it is illegal to “fin” a shark in New York waters, a practice where a shark is caught, its fin removed, and then returned to open waters. A finned shark, unable to swim or pass water across its gills, dies from suffocation or blood loss. The fins are the main ingredient in shark fin soup, a traditional Asian dish.

This bill addresses the growing global demand for shark fins and provides a fair balance between the market for this ingredient and the need to protect sharks by allowing the sale of shark fins of two species of dogfish, which is the most abundant shark species in the North Atlantic Ocean. It also has an exception for shark fins used for educational purposes.

Currently, 70 commercial fishers are licensed to take dogfish, with daily catch limits of 3,000 pounds per licensee. Dogfish are mostly exported to England, where they are the preferred fish for the British staple “fish and chips,” while their fins are exported to Asia. In addition, New York is not the first state to prohibit the sale of shark fins with exceptions related to dogfish; similar legislation has been passed in several states, including California, Illinois, Oregon and Washington.

The Governor also signed legislation extending the regulatory authority of the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) until December 31, 2015 to manage sharks in New York.

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