

**40th ANNUAL MEETING OF NAFO - SEPTEMBER 2018****Amendments to NAFO CEM –
Measure to Conserve Greenland Sharks****Explanatory memorandum**

Under the revised NAFO convention, NAFO members have re-committed themselves to applying an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, including conserving the marine biodiversity within NAFO waters. NAFO has acted upon this responsibility by applying science-based management and implementing the NAFO Precautionary Approach, helping to ensure sustainable fisheries and safeguard the marine environment.

Reflecting this foundational commitment of NAFO, we propose a measure to help to conserve the Greenland shark (*Somniosus microcephalus*). The Scientific Council reported, as a result of an inquiry from NAFO's 2016 Annual Meeting, that Greenland sharks warrant precautionary consideration due to their unknown stock status in the NRA and their long lifespan, extremely delayed maturity and low fecundity which make them more susceptible to overfishing. The Scientific Council noted that Greenland Sharks are assessed as "Near Threatened" by the IUCN Red List Shark Specialist Group based primarily on their biological vulnerability. In NAFO regulatory waters, there are no directed fisheries on Greenland sharks but they are caught incidentally.

The Scientific Council contends that "a prohibition on retention and directed fishing for Greenland sharks is advised, along with the implementation of bycatch reduction measures." This proposal sets out actions that NAFO Contracting Parties can take immediately to help to conserve Greenland sharks, while also setting in motion additional scientific review to support the development of additional management measures, as appropriate. Additionally, to support this effective conservation of Greenland Sharks, the Scientific Council encouraged Contracting Parties to undertake and report to the Scientific Council research on gear restrictions and modifications to reduce or eliminate the incidental catch of Greenland sharks.

Proposal

Reaffirming NAFO's commitment to ecosystem and science-based management;

Recognizing the Scientific Council's advice on Greenland Sharks, including that "management actions should keep fishing mortality as close to zero as possible to ensure that there will be a very low probability that biomass will decline within the foreseeable future;"

Recalling Article 12 "Conservation and Management of Sharks" which requires all Contracting Parties to report all catches of sharks;

Additionally recalling that paragraph of that same Article calls upon Contracting Parties to encourage vessels to release sharks alive, especially juveniles, that are not intended for use as food or subsistence;



Further Recalling paragraph five of Article 12 which calls upon Contracting Parties to undertake research on sharks, including research on gear selectivity for the protection of sharks;

Therefore recommends that CEM Article 12 paragraph 1, be amended by inserting as a new subparagraphs (d) and (e):

- (d) prohibit fishing vessels flying its flag from conducting a directed fishery for Greenland shark (*Somniosus microcephalus*) in the Regulatory Area.**
- (e) require every vessel entitled to fly its flag to undertake all reasonable efforts to minimize incidental catch and mortality, and where alive, release Greenland sharks in a manner that causes the least possible harm.**

Consistent with its Action Plan, we recommend that the Ad Hoc Working Group on Bycatch, Discards and Selectivity (WG-BDS), working with the Scientific Council, identify areas and times where bycatch and discards of Greenland sharks have a higher rate of occurrence. Contracting Parties shall report to WG-BDS on their efforts to minimize incidental catches and mortalities of Greenland Sharks in the NAFO Convention Area, including amounts of Greenland Sharks released and retained 2019-2021. Further, we recommend that the WG-BDS advise the Commission, at its 2021 Annual Meeting, on appropriate management recommendations, including for safe handling practices including for live release, to address the bycatch of Greenland sharks to allow the Commission to consider additional measures for their conservation.