

**JEFF LANDRY
GOVERNOR**



**MADISON D. SHEAHAN
SECRETARY**

PO BOX 98000 | BATON ROUGE LA | 70898

September 3, 2024

Chairman Brandon DeCuir
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
2000 Quail Drive,
Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

Dear Chairman DeCuir and the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission,

Secretary Madison Sheahan and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries respectfully requests the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) to consider expanding recreational and commercial opportunities for blacktip and bull sharks for the benefit of Louisiana sportsmen.

We recommend eliminating recreational size and bag limits for blacktip and bull sharks. For these shark species, we recommend removal of the 54 inch recreational minimum size limit along with the one per person daily possession limit. We also recommend an increase in allowable daily commercial harvest from 45 to 55 sharks per trip, with authority for the Secretary to further modify these commercial harvest limits as deemed necessary.

As a keystone species, sharks play an important role in the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. These sharks, as apex predators, provide for a balanced ecosystem by keeping prey species from over-expanding in population and range and help to keep other predators in check. However, they should be managed holistically and adaptively to account for their rapidly expanding numbers and subsequent interactions. The current size and bag limits were put in place when sharks were at an all-time low. As the species quickly adapts and rebuilds due to successful collaborative conservation efforts, we are obligated to the sportsmen of Louisiana to exercise adaptive management in order to mitigate user conflict and maximize opportunity. Therefore, the blacktip and bull shark numbers are now healthy enough to warrant additional harvest; and doing so would further support our management efforts for numerous species sought after by both commercial and recreational fishermen.

The expanding populations of bull sharks and blacktip sharks in our waters are detrimental to our recreational, charter, and commercial fisheries. Our fishermen have reported an increase in sharks preying upon their catches, causing higher than normal discard mortality and negatively impacting the fisheries they harvest. Allowing for additional recreational and commercial harvest opportunities for these sharks would lead to more efficient operations while providing a positive economic impact on the citizens of Louisiana. We respectfully request your consideration of these recommended changes to the regulations to benefit the Sportsman's Paradise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Sheahan", is written over a horizontal line.

Madison D. Sheahan, Secretary
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries