



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Sunday, July 1, 2012

CONTACT: Brooke Anderson (o. 312-814-3158; c. 312-590-0195)
Annie Thompson (o. 217-782-7355; c. 217-720-1853)

Governor Quinn Signs Law Banning Possession and Sale of Shark Fins in Illinois

Law Will Help Protect Dwindling Shark Populations Worldwide

CHICAGO - July 1, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn today signed a new law that bans the sale, trade, or distribution of shark fins in Illinois. The practice of harvesting shark fins, most commonly for shark fin soup and Asian cuisine, usually results in the shark's death. As part of Governor Quinn's efforts to stop animal cruelty and preserve natural resources in Illinois, this new law will help end the killing of sharks for their fins and prevent the collapse of shark populations worldwide.

"Sharks have roamed our oceans for millions of years but the practice of harvesting them for their fins poses a great threat to the species," Governor Quinn said. "By limiting the market for shark fins, we will protect ocean ecosystems and shark populations around the world."

House Bill 4119, sponsored by Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) and Sen. Antonio Munoz (D-Chicago), bans the selling and trading of shark fins in Illinois, which are harvested and typically used in shark fin soup and Asian cuisine. Frequently, sharks are caught and their fins cut off to be sold or traded. The shark is then thrown finless back into the ocean where it bleeds to death or drowns.

"I would like to thank Governor Quinn for signing legislation and putting Illinois at the forefront of this important issue," said Rep. Feigenholtz. "In addition to being inhumane, the practice of harvesting shark fins has had a devastating impact on worldwide shark populations and put at risk the balance of our global oceanic ecosystems."

"In Illinois and Chicago, where we value our beautiful Lake Michigan, our rivers and natural resources we understand the importance of preserving and saving delicate ecosystems," said Sen. Munoz. "Thank you, Governor Quinn, for helping us do what's right and protect these animals."

Shark populations worldwide have declined by an estimated 90 percent or more during the past 50 years. The demand for shark fins has increased along with the popularity of shark fin soup. This new law will help protect shark populations by prohibiting the fins from being distributed in Illinois. Illinois is the first non-Pacific state to enact such protections. The ban takes effect on Jan. 1.

The Governor signed the law at the Shedd Aquarium's Wild Reef, which is 25 feet below street level. A re-creation of Apo Island, an Indo-Pacific island in the Philippines, the Wild Reef brings one of North America's largest and most-diverse shark habitats to the shores of Lake Michigan. More than 20 sharks reside in a curved-overhead 400,000-gallon habitat, including blacktip reef, spotted and japaense wobbegong, and sandbar sharks. Other large reef fish, such as the 40-pound Napoleon wrasse share the habitat.

-MORE-



“This is a historic day for sharks around the world. We applaud Governor Quinn, State Representative Feigenholtz, the Illinois General Assembly and our coalition partners for enacting this law,” said Ted A. Beattie, Shedd Aquarium president & CEO. “Each year millions of sharks are killed, many only for their fins. As a global conservation and education organization, and leader in shark research, this is welcomed news for these amazing and very misunderstood animals.”

“The unsustainable demand for shark fins has had a devastating impact on shark populations worldwide, and this decisive action makes it clear Illinois will no longer contribute to the cruelty,” said Kristen Strawbridge, Illinois state director for The HSUS. “We thank Governor Quinn for signing this bill into law and making Illinois the first Midwestern state to join the international movement to protect sharks by shutting down the market for shark fins.”

Shedd Aquarium

The John G. Shedd Aquarium, a nonprofit organization dedicated to public education and conservation, is among one of the world’s largest indoor aquariums. The facility houses over 32,500 aquatic animals representing some 1,500 species of fishes, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, birds and mammals from waters around the world. Beautifully situated on the shores of Lake Michigan, Shedd Aquarium is known as “The World’s Aquarium.” Since its opening in 1930, the aquarium’s mission has been to enhance public understanding and appreciation of the aquatic world. Shedd Aquarium is committed to a number of projects designed to preserve threatened or endangered aquatic species. For more information visit www.sheddaquarium.org.

###