

Malaysia Borneo state wants ban on shark fishing

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A Malaysian state on Borneo island, known for its world-class dive sites, is seeking to ban shark fishing to protect the species, which draws thousands of tourists each year, a minister said Monday.

Masidi Manjun, state tourism, culture and environment minister, said Sabah hopes the law can be changed by the end of the year to impose a blanket [ban](#) on killing [sharks](#), which are mainly hunted for their fins to make soup.

"We want to make sure that the ban is a blanket ban of all types of sharks in Sabah," he told AFP.

"Tourists come to see the rich variety of marine life that we have in Sabah, and that includes sharks. It makes economic sense for us to protect our sharks," he added. "The moment they are gone, people will go elsewhere."

Masidi said 42,000 divers, two-thirds of them foreigners, visited the state last year, bringing in more than 190 million ringgit (\$64 million) in revenue.

He said the state is currently consulting with Malaysia's attorney general to change a federal law to introduce the ban for Sabah.

He added that over the past 25 years, some 80 percent of the state's sharks had disappeared and they could now only be spotted at four sites.

Masidi could not say how much the trade in shark's fin was worth. But a bowl of the soup, which is considered a delicacy in parts of Asia, especially among Chinese diners, can easily cost more than 100 ringgit (around \$35), he said.

In 2007, Malaysia's Natural Resources and Environment Ministry struck shark's fin soup off menus at official functions to help conserve the species.

Traffic, an international network that monitors the trade in wildlife, said early this year that Malaysia was the world's 10th biggest catcher of sharks.

Worldwide up to 73 million sharks are killed every year, primarily for their [fins](#), it said.

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