

French move boosts shark sanctuaries

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Delegates attend the 9th regular session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in Manila on December 2. Green campaigners on Friday hailed a decision by France at the meeting that they said would create the world's biggest shark sanctuary.

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On Monday, the government of [French Polynesia](#) included the mako, the last shark that was not protected in its waters, on the list of fish banned from capture or trade in its vast territorial zone in the South Pacific.

The move was announced on Thursday at the annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting in Manila, where nations also agreed to take steps to protect [whale sharks](#) from tuna nets.

"At more than 4.7 million square kilometres (1.5 million square miles) of ocean, this designation doubles the size of the area already protected by all six existing shark sanctuaries," said Josh Reichert, head of the [Pew Environment Group](#).

But, he said, "sharks are threatened throughout much of the world's oceans, and there is a great need to protect them before they slip below levels from which they may never recover".

According to [conservation group](#) WWF, about 73 million sharks are killed every year, mainly for their fins—a practice that has brought a third of shark species into the category of threatened, or near-threatened, with extinction.

The United States banned finning in its waters in 2000 and several American states have banned the trade in [shark fins](#).

The European Union (EU) has had a finning ban since 2003, but in March endorsed even tighter shark fishing rules that would force fishermen to bring sharks to port intact.

In November, the EU said it would maintain for another two years a total ban on fishing for endangered deepwater [shark species](#). It applies to EU waters and to EU boats in international waters.

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