

New York eyes shark fin trade ban

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Trays filled with shark fins are displayed at a store in Chinatown in San Francisco, California in 2011. A group of New York legislators on Tuesday unveiled a draft law banning trade in shark fins, saying the practice, which serves the market for Chinese shark fin soup, was decimating the ocean predators.

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If enacted, New York would join California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington as US states outlawing the sale, possession and trade in the fins, which fishermen slice off, often before tossing the rest of the much less valuable shark back in the water.

"The decimation of the shark population is a serious concern as it has a detrimental trickle-down effect for the entire oceanic food chain," New York state Senator Mark Grisanti said in a statement.

"With the shark population in serious peril, and other countries and states passing legislation to protect sharks, New York should be a leader in extending protection to these magnificent animals," he said.

"Action to ban the barbaric practice of shark finning is long overdue," said state assembly member Alan Maisel. "Sharks occupy the top of the [marine food chain](#) and are a critical part of the [ocean ecosystem](#)."

Maisel said he hoped ultimately for a nationwide ban on the trade.

Last week, President [Barack Obama](#) was criticized by environmentalists for getting take-out from a Chinese restaurant in San Francisco that has [shark fin soup](#) on the menu. The White House said he had not ordered the soup.

Environmentalists say that tens of millions of sharks are killed each year as fishermen slice off their fins for dinner tables, leaving them to die in the water. [Sharks](#) have few offspring, compounding risks to their survival.

The United States banned finning in its waters in 2000. Obama in January 2011 signed the Shark Conservation Act that toughened regulations by banning imports of fins that are not attached to corresponding shark carcasses.

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