



26<sup>th</sup> October 2020

## Signatories (Via Email)

Dear signatories,

Thank for your letter of October 8<sup>th</sup>. In our previous correspondence I said that communication is more important than ever, and in that spirit, I want to thank all signatories to this letter for taking time to present your perspective to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). As you know, MSC shares your objection to the practice of shark finning and is committed to using our certification program as effectively as we can to eliminate this abhorrent practice.

I note two proposals in your letter for how the MSC should revise its requirements on shark finning. I've briefly responded to these below, and would also like to reiterate that reinforcing our zero tolerance to shark finning is at the heart of our work as part of the Fisheries Standard Review (FSR). I also note your request to participate in upcoming governance meeting, and to present your proposals to our various governance bodies directly. I have provided a response to this request below.

### *Proposals for how to strengthen the MSC's zero tolerance policy on shark finning*

In your letter you propose that any evidence for shark finning must preclude a fishery for certification. In fact, this is already the case. Recent changes to the Fisheries Certification Process (FCP) v2.2, and the retraction of a previous interpretation of our requirements, make it clear that any evidence of shark finning will result in disqualification from the MSC program. Our intent on this issue is clear-cut. Furthermore, we have published a [new interpretation](#) to help assessors understand exactly what steps are required if evidence of shark finning comes to light in a certified fishery.

Your letter goes on to propose that any fishery interacting with sharks must have a fins naturally attached (FNA) policy in place as prerequisite for certification. The question of what evidence provides sufficient confidence that shark finning is not taking place is central to our work on this topic in the FSR, on which we held consultations this summer. Your proposal has been captured in the feedback from several signatories to your letter that was gathered during those consultations, and I take note of it again here. The MSC operates within the context of numerous highly engaged stakeholders, and there exists a multitude of views on what the MSC should do and how to do it. Your feedback will therefore be considered carefully along with that from others regarding how the Fisheries Standard can be improved.

### *Request for participation in the policy development process*

The MSC appreciates the now longstanding interest and engagement that signatories to this letter have shown with regard to our work. In particular, I want to thank several of signatories for their participation at our recent consultation activities this summer. These consultations have been enormously useful in gathering feedback from our wide range of stakeholders. Reports summarising these activities will be published on our website by 30<sup>th</sup> October.

The way in which the MSC governs its policy development and engages with stakeholders has evolved considerably over the years. We enable the input of a broad and diverse representation of stakeholder views and expert engagement on the one hand, and employ robust mechanisms to arrive at decisions in an efficient manner on the other. This approach enables us to listen to a multitude of stakeholder perspectives during consultation opportunities, discuss topics in depth within our governance advisory bodies, which are then able to provide a broad view to the Board to inform its decisions.

Given the current arrangement of the STAC and TAB, the MSC has limited space to offer observer attendance at their meetings. As we have evolved the operation of these meetings in recent years, we have learned to take careful account of the specific expertise that an observer is able to bring to these meetings. We also need to consider whether there are more effective mechanisms for third party participation within our policy making processes.

Reflecting on this with regard to the broad range of signatories of your letter, we believe that we can gain greatest value from your perspectives through your active contributions to our consultation exercises. As a result, we will not be extending an invitation to you to observe the forthcoming STAC and TAB meetings.

Similarly, it will not be possible for representatives of your group to present a proposal to the MSC's governing bodies. MSC operates a policy development procedure that ensures due diligence of proposals, including a substantial period of consultation and impact testing. It is not possible, nor is it appropriate, for the MSC's governance bodies to consider proposals outside of this process.

I would note that, at least in part due to your feedback in consultations to date, we will be proposing to our governance bodies that we publicly consult on revised shark finning requirements next year as part of the FSR process. We welcome your participation in our planned FSR consultations in 2021.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your continued interest in the MSC and its work, and your commitment to eliminating the practice of shark finning.

Kind regards



**Dr Rohan Currey**  
**Chief Science and Standards Officer**