



24 August 2010

Vincent Grimaud  
International Affairs, Law of the Sea & Regional Fisheries Organisations  
Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries  
European Commission  
Rue Joseph II, 99  
B-1040 Brussels

Dear Mr. Grimaud:

On behalf of our organizations, we are writing to encourage European Union (EU) support for science-based limits on threatened thorny skates at next month's annual meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). Specifically, we urge the European Commission to work to secure a reduction in the NAFO thorny skate total allowable catch (TAC) from 12,000 metric tons (t) to no more than the level recommended this year by the NAFO Scientific Council (5,000t).

We are seriously concerned about the status and management of thorny skate (*Amblyraja radiata*), classified by IUCN as *Vulnerable* globally and *Critically Endangered* off the U.S. east coast. Whereas setting the world's first Regional Fishery Management Organization TAC for a shark or ray was a major accomplishment for NAFO, we maintain that this limit must be in line with scientific advice in order for it to be effective in rebuilding the population.

In the report from their June meeting, the NAFO Scientific Council notes that the region's thorny skate population is still at a low level and recommends "that catches in 2011 and 2012 should not exceed 5000 t (the average catch during the past three years) in NAFO Div. 3LNO" in order to promote recovery. The Scientific Council also highlights that "the life history characteristics of thorny skate result in low intrinsic rates of increase and are thought to lead to low resilience to fishing mortality."

Given that Spain is the main player in the NAFO thorny skate fishery, the EU has a key role in negotiation of the TAC as well as an important responsibility to work to ensure sustainable fisheries for this vulnerable species. Moreover, adherence to scientific advice is integral to the European *Community Plan of Action for Sharks* and Commissioner Damanaki's programme for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, both of which we strongly support.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the meeting.

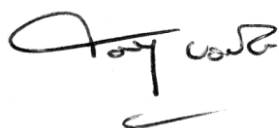
Sincerely,



Sonja Fordham  
President  
Shark Advocates International



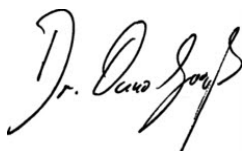
Heike Zidowitz  
President  
European Elasmobranch Association



Tony Long  
Director, European Policy Office  
World Wildlife Fund



Dr. Matthias Stehmann  
Scientific Advisory Board Member  
German Elasmobranch Society




Dr. Onno Gross  
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Jenny Miller Garmendia  
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Sandrine Polti  
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Daniela Freyer  
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Martin Clark  
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