

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 17
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division (WHM)
Topic: Hammerhead Sharks
Hansard Page: 114-115
Question Date: 08 February 2016
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Siewert asked:

Senator SIEWERT: ... Is the government considering postponing the assessment and granting of a wildlife trade operation for the harvest of hammerhead sharks given this assessment process? Why is that process continuing if you are in fact carrying out further research looking at the status of these sharks?

Mr Oxley: I think we are in a sequence of questions that are all interrelated, so it would be a little bit difficult to try to answer one element of them. I will give you the broad outline of what we have sought to do. There are many fisheries in Australia which take hammerhead sharks in one way or another. We have already done what is called a non-detriment finding, which indicates that the level of take of hammerhead sharks is not detrimental to their survival in the wild. That non-detriment finding means that, because they are appendix 2 listed under CITES, trade is okay in those circumstances. Because the sharks are caught across multiple fisheries, we have sought to do one national assessment of the impact of all those fisheries on sharks and to put in place what is called a wildlife trade operation so that for all the fisheries the trade is okay based on that earlier non-detriment finding. It is a process thing to make sure that we have a consolidated view and decision in relation to the export of hammerhead sharks.

Senator SIEWERT: How can you reach that non-detrimental impact if you are funding a status update on hammerhead sharks?

Mr Oxley: That status update is being undertaken. The detail of that I will need to take on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: You are taking on notice whether there is funding for that program. While you are taking that on notice, can you please take on notice how much it is costing, when it started and when it is due to be completed.

Mr Oxley: Yes, of course.

Answer:

The non-detriment finding was prepared as part of a requirement for export of hammerhead shark species that is required under the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and Part 13A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (1999) (EPBC Act).

The Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) is separately assessing scalloped, great and smooth hammerhead sharks for their eligibility for inclusion on the list of threatened species under Part 13 of the EPBC Act. The original completion date for the assessments was 30 September 2015. This was extended to 30 September 2017.

A Hammerhead shark project, entitled 'Exploring the status of Australia's hammerhead sharks' is being undertaken by the Marine Biodiversity Hub under the National Environmental Science Program (NESP). This project was approved for funding under the Hub's Research Plan (Version 1) in June 2015, and is due to be completed by April 2016.

NESP Hub funding allocated to the project was \$104,000 and a further \$118,000 was provided as in-kind support by partner organisations.

While outputs from the NESP project will inform the listing assessments, the extension was sought by the TSSC to allow sufficient time for analysis and consultation with State and Territory government agencies.