

AB 2109 signed into law, providing new protections for white sharks

October 5, 2022



On Monday, Sept. 19, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law Assembly Bill 2109, providing new protections for white sharks in California waters. White sharks, also called great white sharks, are already a protected species and an important part of the ocean ecosystem as top-level predators. There is enormous public and scientific interest in them.

Sponsored by Assemblymember Steve Bennett, the bill passed the California legislature with an overwhelming majority of support. The new restrictions aim to get ahead of activities that may lead to increased interactions between white sharks and humans, and to give law enforcement more tools to protect white sharks from intentional efforts to catch or attract them. The new law also helps protect the public from interactions with white sharks that have been unintentionally hooked by fishermen by restricting when and where chum and shark bait can be used, while still allowing other legal fishing activities to continue.

“Sharks are one of California’s most iconic marine species, and it’s our responsibility to ensure that their populations are sustained,” Assemblymember Bennett said. “At the same time, public safety is of the utmost importance.”

“This bill represents a collaborative engagement between anglers, the scientific community, the legislature and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop proactive, common-sense approaches to further protect California’s iconic white sharks, while also protecting ocean users and preserving recreational fishing opportunities,” said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham.

Anglers should note the new rules regarding take of white sharks go into effect on January 1, 2023. These rules, found in California Fish and Game Code, section 5517, prohibit the use of shark bait, shark lures or shark chum to attract a white shark. Anglers also may not place those items into the water within one nautical mile of any shoreline, pier or jetty, when a white shark is visible or known to be present.

CDFW continues to work with partners to proactively address the potential for fishing activities to lead to white shark interactions. The Coastal Conservation Association of California is also very supportive of protecting white sharks.

“We fight for responsible and sustainable fishing practices while also supporting regulations to protect our most vulnerable resources,” said Wayne Kotow, executive director for CCA CAL. “We are all stewards of the resources and need to work together for the future of our favorite sport of fishing.”

“We have seen increased use of California beaches as nursery habitat for juvenile white sharks,” said Chris Lowe, a professor in marine biology and director of the Shark Lab at California State University. “This bill will help reduce fishery interactions with white sharks, helping the protected sharks and ocean users by reducing the risk of hooking these sharks at public beaches and ocean piers where people are swimming, surfing and diving.”

For more information about white sharks, please visit CDFW’s White Shark Information webpage, which includes answers to frequently asked questions, as well as shark incident information going back to 1950. Additional questions may be sent to CDFW’s Marine Region via email.