

PANEL 4 STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES

The United States notes that, due to at-vessel and post-release mortality, a simple no-retention requirement is not expected to reduce mortality enough to stop overfishing and rebuild the North Atlantic shortfin mako shark stock. In the 2019 Panel 4 sessions, the SCRS Vice Chair stated that a simple no-retention policy alone would likely still result in substantial mortality and that other changes to fishing practices would be needed to sufficiently reduce mortality. Similarly, a TAC and allocations, particularly without gear modifications or changes in fishing practices, will not effectively reduce catches of North Atlantic shortfin mako, inclusive of dead discards, and bring mortality in line with scientific advice.

The U.S. proposal seeks to comprehensively address the threats facing North Atlantic shortfin mako by reducing mortality to ensure rebuilding, while allowing for management practices that best achieve the necessary mortality reductions within the context of discrete fisheries. Under the U.S. proposal, an initial requirement for no retention across the board (similar to the approach proposed by Canada) is coupled with science-based reductions in individual CPC catches, as well as gear modifications (nylon monofilament leaders and large circle hooks in longline fisheries) and best practices for safe handling and release of sharks. This approach is designed to reduce both at-haulback and post-release mortality -- mortality that is not addressed by other proposals under discussion-- and offers the best approach to achieve SCRS recommended mortality reductions. The efficacy of such measures, if well implemented, has been demonstrated in U.S. fisheries (for information on how the United States has achieved reductions of shortfin mako mortality in excess of those required by PA4-805 "*Draft recommendation by ICCAT to establish a rebuilding program for north Atlantic shortfin mako sharks caught in association with ICCAT fisheries*", see PA4-807, the U.S. paper on "*Best practices for reducing total mortality of North Atlantic shortfin mako sharks*"). Under the U.S. approach, CPCs would be responsible for achieving their required reductions and keeping their overall mortality at the specified, scientifically based level, with flexibility to allow some retention once they have met their obligation to reduce mortality to or below that level. Until these mortality reductions are met, however, the no retention requirement would apply.