

**Calendar No. 349**

119TH CONGRESS }  
2d Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT  
119-114 }

SUPPORTING THE HEALTH OF AQUATIC  
SYSTEMS THROUGH RESEARCH KNOWL-  
EDGE AND ENHANCED DIALOGUE ACT OF  
2025

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R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION

ON

S. 2314



MARCH 4, 2026.—Ordered to be printed

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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## Calendar No. 349

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### SUPPORTING THE HEALTH OF AQUATIC SYSTEMS THROUGH RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE AND ENHANCED DIALOGUE ACT OF 2025

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Mr. CRUZ, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation, submitted the following

### R E P O R T

[To accompany S. 2314]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, to which was referred the bill (S. 2314) to direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force regarding shark depredation, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

#### PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of S. 2314, the SHARKED Act of 2025, is to establish a task force representative of the fisheries management and shark research community to identify and address issues with respect to shark depredation and report those findings to Congress.

#### BACKGROUND AND NEEDS

Shark depredation refers to the partial or complete removal of a hooked fish by a shark before it can be landed, often resulting in the loss or damage of the catch, destroyed gear, and disrupted fishing operations.<sup>1</sup> Depredation has been observed across the Gulf of America and South Atlantic in private recreational, for-hire, and

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<sup>1</sup> NOAA Fisheries, “Shark Depredation: A Frustrating Experience for Fishermen in the Atlantic,” feature story, June 4, 2024, <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/shark-depredation-frustrating-experience-fishermen-atlantic>.

commercial hook and line fisheries, with reports of rising frequency.<sup>2</sup> This phenomenon has become an increasingly frustrating issue for both commercial and recreational fishers, affecting economically valuable species like red snapper, grouper, tuna, and mackerel, leading to financial and operational costs.<sup>3</sup> Fishermen report damaged gear, lost catch, and time-consuming replacements of bait and tackle.<sup>4</sup> The South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council has submitted multiple letters to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) relaying concerns from commercial and recreational fishermen about shark depredation and the negative conservation impacts it is having on Council-managed species and fisheries.<sup>5</sup>

Shark interactions with fisheries are complex, making it difficult to determine the major factors contributing to the increased frequency of shark depredation.<sup>6</sup> There are several factors that may be contributing to the rise in shark depredation. Conservation efforts by NMFS under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, for example, have increased the populations of some shark species, which may be increasing the likelihood of sharks interacting with anglers. Concurrently, the growing number of recreational anglers has increased the number of fishing lines in the water, as well as the number of fish released, possibly attracting sharks by providing them with more opportunities to exploit easy prey.<sup>7</sup> In addition, studies and anecdotal reports suggest that some shark species have developed conditioned behavior, associating boat engines and fishing activity with feeding opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

Fisheries managers and scientists are actively working to better understand and mitigate shark depredation. NMFS, in collaboration with regional fishery management councils and academic institutions, has launched multiple research initiatives.<sup>9</sup> For example, Florida Atlantic University is using DNA swabs from the lines of bitten fish to identify depredating shark species and assess encounter rates.<sup>10</sup> The results of this collaboration have identified bull and sandbar sharks as the most common depredating shark species, and snapper and grouper species as the most frequently targeted fish.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the study found that finer scale factors such as water depth, habitat type, fishing pressure, specific fishing locations, and fishing techniques may play a more direct role in determining depredation rates, rather than broader seasonal or regional trends.<sup>12</sup> In support of these and other findings, NMFS plans to conduct stock assessments of sandbar and bull sharks, ex-

<sup>2</sup> NOAA Fisheries, *Report to Congress: Interactions Between Bottlenose Dolphins and Sharks and Commercial, For-Hire, and Private Recreational Fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic*, August 2022, [https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2022-08/NMFS-Assessment-Fishing-Interference-RTC-08\\_29\\_22.pdf](https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2022-08/NMFS-Assessment-Fishing-Interference-RTC-08_29_22.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> "Taking a Bite: Shark Depredation and Fisheries Management," South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, December 1, 2023, <https://safmc.net/posts/taking-a-bite-shark-depredation-and-fisheries-management/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* at 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* at 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* at 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* at 2.

<sup>10</sup> Gisele Galoustian, "Study Takes a 'Bite' Out of Shark Depredation Using Citizen Science," Florida Atlantic University, February 11, 2025, <https://www.fau.edu/newsdesk/articles/shark-depredation-citizen-science.php>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* at 10.

plore improvements in data collection systems, and fund research into cost-effective solutions to limit shark depredation.<sup>13</sup>

#### SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS

S. 2314 would direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force to address shark depredation.

#### LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

S. 2314 was introduced on July 16, 2025, by Senator Scott (FL) (for himself and Senator Schatz) and was referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation of the Senate. On July 30, 2025, the Committee met in open Executive Session and, by voice vote, ordered S. 2314 reported favorably without amendment.

H.R. 207, an identical House bill, was introduced on January 3, 2025, by Representative Wittman (for himself and Representatives Webster, Soto, and Veasey) and was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives. Representative Donalds is an additional cosponsor. On January 21, 2025, the House passed H.R. 207 by voice vote.

#### *118th Congress*

H.R. 4051, the SHARKED Act, was introduced on June 12, 2023, by Representative Wittman (for himself and Representatives Soto, Graves (LA), and Veasey) and was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives. Representatives Pappas and Webster were additional cosponsors. On September 20, 2023, that Committee met in open Executive Session and, by voice vote, ordered H.R. 4051 reported favorably with an amendment. On February 5, 2024, H.R. 4051, as amended, passed the House by voice vote.

#### ESTIMATED COSTS

In accordance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee provides the following cost estimate, prepared by the Congressional Budget Office:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid at 1.

| S. 2314, SHARKED Act of 2025                                                                           |      |                                           |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------------|---------------|
| As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on July 30, 2025  |      |                                           |               |
| By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars                                                                    | 2026 | 2026-2030                                 | 2026-2035     |
| Direct Spending (Outlays)                                                                              | 0    | 0                                         | 0             |
| Revenues                                                                                               | 0    | 0                                         | 0             |
| Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit                                                                | 0    | 0                                         | 0             |
| Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)                                                            | *    | 2                                         | not estimated |
| Increases <i>net direct spending</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2036? | No   | Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply? | No            |
|                                                                                                        |      | Mandate Effects                           |               |
| Increases <i>on-budget deficits</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2036?  | No   | Contains intergovernmental mandate?       | No            |
|                                                                                                        |      | Contains private-sector mandate?          | No            |
| * = between zero and \$500,000.                                                                        |      |                                           |               |

S. 2314 would require the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to establish a task force to identify strategies to reduce shark depredation—the loss or damage of hooked fish to sharks before an angler can reel them in. The task force would include representatives from NOAA and knowledgeable people from other federal and nonfederal entities and would terminate seven years after its establishment.

Under the bill, the task force would coordinate research to identify species most often involved in such interactions and the migratory patterns and behavior of those species. It also would develop recommendations to mitigate the toll of shark depredation and communication methods to distribute the information to fishing communities. The task force would need to submit biennial reports to the Congress on its findings.

For this estimate, CBO assumes that S. 2314 will be enacted in 2026 and that the task force will be established by the end of fiscal year 2026. Using information from NOAA, CBO estimates the costs for travel for the task force and for staff to develop reports would be a little less than \$500,000 for each year and would total \$2 million over the 2026–2030 period. Any related spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds. In 2024, NOAA allocated about \$1 million for research projects related to shark depredation, the most recent year for which CBO can determine that such an allocation was made.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Emilia Oliva. The estimate was reviewed by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.

PHILLIP L. SWAGEL,  
*Director, Congressional Budget Office.*

#### REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

In accordance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee provides the following evaluation of the regulatory impact of the legislation, as reported:

## NUMBER OF PERSONS COVERED

S. 2314, as reported, would not subject individuals to new regulations. However, the task force that would be established by S. 2314 could recommend new regulations as part of its findings.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

S. 2314, as reported, is not expected to have any adverse impacts on the Nation's economy. The bill could ultimately help to reduce the loss or damage of catch, destroyed gear, and disrupted fishing operations.

## PRIVACY

S. 2314, as reported, would not have any adverse impact on the personal privacy of individuals.

## PAPERWORK

S. 2314, as reported, would not increase paperwork requirements for private individuals or businesses. The bill would require the task force to submit a report to Congress regarding its findings no later than 2 years after the date of enactment and every 2 years thereafter until the termination of the task force.

## CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING

In compliance with paragraph 4(b) of rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee provides that no provisions contained in the bill, as reported, meet the definition of congressionally directed spending items under the rule.

## SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

*Section 1. Short title.*

This section would provide that the bill may be cited as the “Supporting the Health of Aquatic systems through Research Knowledge and Enhanced Dialogue Act of 2025” or the “SHARKED Act of 2025”.

*Section 2. Shark depredation task force and research projects.*

This section would direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force to identify and address critical needs with respect to shark depredation, including developing ways to improve coordination and communication across fisheries management and shark research communities, identify research priorities, develop management strategies to address shark depredation, and coordinate the development and distribution of educational materials to help the fishing community minimize shark interactions.

This section would require the Secretary to appoint individuals to the task force, including one representative from each of the Regional Fishery Management Councils, one from each Marine Fisheries Commission, one from the fish and wildlife agency of each coastal State represented on the Council, and one representative from the National Marine Fisheries Service. The task force would also need to include an expert in the management of highly migra-

tory species, and researchers with expertise in shark management, behavior, and ecology.

This section would also direct the task force to submit a report to Congress regarding its findings no later than 2 years after the date of enactment and every 2 years thereafter until the termination of the task force. The task force would be terminated no later than 7 years after it is established.

This section would direct the Secretary to give priority to projects that seek to better understand shark depredation when awarding cooperative research and management programs under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.<sup>14</sup> It would also clarify that nothing in this section shall be construed to affect the authority and responsibility of the Secretary in carrying out the Endangered Species Act of 1973<sup>15</sup> or the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, this section would define the term “coastal State”.

#### CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new material is printed in *italic*, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

## MAGNUSON-STEVENS FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT

\* \* \* \* \*

[16 U.S.C. 1867(c); Public Law 94–265]

### SEC. 318. COOPERATIVE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

(a) \* \* \*

(b) \* \* \*

(c) **FUNDING.**—In making funds available the Secretary shall award funding on a competitive basis and based on regional fishery management needs, select programs that form part of a coherent program of research focused on solving priority issues identified by the Councils, and shall give priority to the following projects:

(1) Projects to collect data to improve, supplement, or enhance stock assessments, including the use of fishing vessels or acoustic or other marine technology.

(2) Projects to assess the amount and type of bycatch or post-release mortality occurring in a fishery.

(3) Conservation engineering projects designed to reduce bycatch, including avoidance of post-release mortality, reduction of bycatch in high seas fisheries, and transfer of such fishing technologies to other nations.

(4) Projects for the identification of habitat areas of particular concern and for habitat conservation.

(5) Projects designed to collect and compile economic and social data.

<sup>14</sup> Public Law 94–265.

<sup>15</sup> Public Law 93–205.

<sup>16</sup> Public Law 94–265.

(6) *Projects to better understand shark depredation, including identifying what causes increases in shark depredation and determining how to best address shark depredation.*

(d) \* \* \*

(e) \* \* \*

(f) \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

