



# St. Maarten Nature Foundation Shark Research Project

DCNA Board Meeting October 2012





# Outline:

- Background
- Legislation
- Research





# Background Sharks on St. Maarten

- Home to various species of shark (Caribbean Reef, Lemon, Blacktip, Nurse: occasional Tiger, Bull and Whale)
- Working Economic Value for one Specimen Estimated at USD \$80,000 to Economy
- Very Important Ecosystem Function
- Very Popular Tourism Attraction
- Caveat Man of War Shoal Marine Park





State Park is a great way to enjoy the outdoors. It offers a variety of recreational activities for all ages. The park is located in the heart of the state and is a great place to spend a day with family and friends. The park features a variety of trails, including hiking, biking, and horseback riding. There are also picnic areas, playgrounds, and a visitor center. The park is a great place to enjoy the outdoors and is a great place to spend a day with family and friends.



Map of the state showing the location of the park

- Legend**
- State Park
  - County
  - City
  - Town
  - Village
  - Post Office
  - State



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  - Horseback riding
  - Picnicking
  - Fishing
  - Hunting
  - Camping
  - Boating
  - Swimming
  - Snowmobiling
  - Ice skating
  - Skiing
  - Snowshoeing
  - Cross-country skiing
  - Ice fishing
  - Winter sports
  - Winter festivals
  - Winter events
  - Winter activities
  - Winter recreation
  - Winter entertainment
  - Winter education
  - Winter research
  - Winter conservation
  - Winter preservation
  - Winter restoration
  - Winter stewardship
  - Winter management
  - Winter planning
  - Winter implementation
  - Winter evaluation
  - Winter monitoring
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# The Shark Dilemma 1: 2010

- Sports Fishermen catching and often killing sharks from beaches
- Very contentious issue within community
- Dive Operators Furious
- Fishermen Furious
- Actually Everyone furious (media polemic)
- Stakeholder discussions held with dive operators, government and fishermen
- Initial Idea to work with Fishermen on a tag and release program which would also involve divers
- Education Program in School
- DCNA Asked Advice on shark tagging supplies









# Result

- After Initial Interest and Media Storm Everyone Except NFSXM Lost Interest





# Shark Dilemma 2: 2011

- Nature Foundation and Dive Centers Noticing Horrible Scars on Animals and Less Sharks
- Various alerts sent to Nature Foundation regarding shark poaching
- Culprits known
- But...Sharks caught just outside of Marine Park
- Talks started with Government regarding possibility of protecting Sharks













# Shark Dilemma 2012 Continued

- Extensive Discussions with Government Resulted in Request Nature Foundation to set up draft legislation
- Legislation drafted and sent to Ministry TEATT
- Lengthy legal Review
- Finally in September 2012 through Ministerial Decree Sharks, Rays and Skates (?) protected for all territorial waters





# Legislation

- Sharks protected for a period of ten years
- After ten years protection comes under review
- Nature Foundation Gives Recommendation on successes of protection
- Recommendation based on RESEARCH





# Research

- Sharks are protected now what? No data
- Research project aimed to figure out range, distribution and species composition
- This time working with a handpicked group of fishermen and divers
- Both in-water and catch and release tagging will be used
- DCNA Sponsored project with DCNA Purchasing Tags from FloyTag
- Project to last for one Year...extended to include Large Game fish in Territorial Waters
- Hope to extend tagging program to include radio tagging for larger pelagic to see if there is migration between sister islands (SAB, EUX, AXA, STK)





# All is not well: Law Enforcement

- One instance of Shark Poaching Recorded
- Happened during near shore patrol
- Carcass confiscated
- Fine issued to fishermen
- NFSXM staff almost got beat up



