



To whom it may concern,

With this presentation we hope to answer some questions and clarify the many facts that are unknown about the business of Hawaii Shark Encounters.

Critical statements and creation of policy has been proposed based on assumptions and general accusations. We hope to be able to become part of the conversation to find rational solutions that are based on facts, rather than being viewed as “Enemy Number One”. We truly feel that we have a business that is contributing to the common good, and, at the same time, is hugely misunderstood. There has been a great emotional force invested by the people that are pushing the agenda of banning Shark tours state wide.

We were not associated with the business that recently attempted starting a tour in Hawaii Kai, neither did we support their decisions.

We understand the concerns of the community and agree that Maunalua Bay is not an appropriate location for a tour.

Why are we different?

We operate in an area more than three miles off shore in deep waters. The water is over 600 feet deep and well outside the area of recreational users. Only crab fishermen and trolling boats frequent the area. The species of sharks that reside in this area are not aggressive or known to have ever attacked humans in Hawaii. Worldwide there are only five bites reported by sandbar sharks and one by a Galapagos shark from the year 1580 – 2008.

Since we go to an area with and existing population we do not have to attract reef sharks or any other sharks to the area.

Addressing the main issue of public safety, shark research has shown clearly that this population of sharks does not travel to the coastal reefs, and that there are no real concerns of endangering the public. It has also shown that there hasn’t been an increase or decrease in sharks and that they continue their natural behavior and yearly migrations.

Hawaii Shark Encounters has been operating since 2003 without any accidents, a safety record that is matched by few commercial operations.

There are many more details to consider.

This two-page outline serves as an overview of the attachments included.

Attachment A – Hawaii Shark Encounters Tour Description

Attachment B – Hawaii Shark Encounters Business Description

Attachment C – Research Details

Attachment D – Shark Conservation and Education

Attachment E – Other Activities in Hawaii State Waters

Attachment F – Shark Attack Data and Statistics

Attachment G – Statements in Support of Shark Tours from Experts and Residents

**Research** - To learn about a wild population of ocean animals you have to go out there and spend time observing the ocean, the environment and circumstances, day after day.

A better understanding of shark populations is the only way to manage fisheries and to improve public safety. Combining research with a commercial operation, as is done with Hawaii Shark Encounters, is the only way to realistically support long-term observation and research.

### **Conservation - Education**

We have a responsibility to take care of our ocean and to treat the animals with respect. To simply “leave them alone” is not enough anymore. Many shark species are being wiped off the planet faster than we can act. Without understanding and acceptance there will never be support for conservation. Shark tours, just like whale watching, are the most effective tool to affect a real emotion and concern for the animal.

**Activities in State Waters** - There are many activities that occur in State waters that would be a concern if scrutinized and judged by the same rules. The existing double standard makes it perfectly legal to kill sharks, but not to look at them, even if the methods are the same.

**Research Data** shows clearly that the fear of shark attacks is unfounded, even in Hawaiian waters, where millions of people enter the water every year. Additionally it shows that there has been no increase in attacks in 20 years, with or without Shark Tours.

### **Hawaii – Ambassador of the ocean**

Hawaii should be proud to be one of the last places that still has a population of sharks and embrace a forward looking attitude that is open minded, not a reactive attitude that is fueled by fear and misinformation.

With a proper management plan that includes shark conservation and education Hawaii can set an example for shark conservation worldwide.

**Statements** from professionals, experts and local residents will show you a cross section of the many people that are in support of our tour. They may not be at public meetings to shout their objectives, but they nevertheless feel just as passionately about it. They not only express personal impressions but also bring up many valid points that are important to consider in this discussion. We selected only a few of the many testimonials to cover different aspects of the concerns. We did not feel it necessary to bombard you with hundreds of letters or signatures, but if necessary we can supply that as well.

Statements included:

- Doug Perrine, M.A. Marine Biology and Fisheries, Author and Conservationist
- Marlu West, President Save The Sea Turtles International
- Patricia Morine, Maui resident, born and raised on North shore Oahu
- David Fleetham, Underwater photographer Journalist, Maui, Hawaii
- Linda Tatreau, Marine Biology teacher, Guam
- Brent Tibbatts, Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources, Guam
- Hannes Jaenicke, TV host, Producer, Wildlife documentaries ZDF Germany
- Marty Snyderman, Filmmaker, Shark Expert, Conservationist
- Richard Theiss, Documentary Film maker/ journalist

We hope you will consider all aspects equally.

## Hawaii Shark Encounters

### *Why is the location on the North Shore different than any other place? Why do the sharks show up?*

The North shore has always had a large resident group of Galapagos and sandbar sharks. So does the Westside of Oahu. This may be a lesser-known fact to visitors and even residents of Oahu, as these sharks are hardly ever seen along the coastline and beaches or even at the surface. Fishing boats are more familiar with them. Because these sharks are bottom-feeding sharks that look for crab, crustaceans and octopus, they prefer the areas of the ocean where the bottom has a sandy or muddy consistency, which is found at the 150 to 200 foot depth. They also cruise up and down the column of the water, to scavenge for sick, weak or dying fish, which is why they are so important in keeping our oceans clean.

They will also check out anything that floats in the water column, such as logs and debris and, in our case, our boat and cage, as fish life in the open blue ocean will often congregate under and around such floating objects. We visit a site where the sharks naturally occur and observe them as they go about their business.

### *Tour Description*

More than just an adventure, this educational tour takes visitors into a world that few can ever experience. The open ocean world of sharks!

Located on the North Shore of Oahu, this tour takes them into the open ocean, over three miles off shore, where they can observe Galapagos and Sandbar sharks in their natural environment from the safety of a cage.

A floating cage keeps humans and sharks safely separated from each other. No scuba experience is necessary as the guests can enter the cage from above and will stay on the surface. This makes it possible for a wide range of people of all ages and skill levels to participate.

Large Poly glass windows let them peer into the open ocean and watch the sharks as they glide gracefully and effortlessly through the deep blue. Curiosity brings the sharks closer, sometimes within inches of the window where the gaze of shark and human meets. It is a deeply moving experience. To be in the presence of such awe inspiring animals affects a person in a way that will change the way they see sharks forever.

A very important part of our shark adventure is education. Guests are presented with fascinating facts about shark biology and behavior, about ocean life and conservation issues and about the significance of sharks in Hawaiian culture and mythology.

We try to convey the intimate and spiritual connection the people of Hawaii have to the ocean and sharks as they are a revered part of their history and believe system.

Each guest can also take part in the ongoing shark research projects and can continue on as an ambassador for conservation, an experience that will last well past the day of the tour.

An estimated 60 percent of the world's sharks have been killed and the numbers continue to rapidly decline. Through a personal encounter we hope to show the beauty and importance of sharks. They need our understanding and protection.

Anyone that has visited the deep blue walks away a changed person, having found a new appreciation for the ocean's incredible inhabitants.

### Hawaii Shark Encounters – sustainable eco tourism

#### *1) Sustainable practices and Public Safety*

Our tour is inherently low impact; much less than any diving or fishing operation. We go to the same site, over three miles off shore, where we are able to observe a population of animals that has always lived there. We don't waste fuel or pollute the environment. We don't touch any reefs. We don't anchor. We let people climb into a cage to see the sharks in their natural environment. Sharks inspect the cage and the boat just as they would check out floating debris, buoys or boats that are not moving. They investigate, they interact with the other sharks and they come and go as they please.

Staying in one place to give the animal the option to approach is the ultimate way to show respect to the shark.

The only impact we have is on the psyche of the guests. Their eyes are opened and they change their mind about sharks and the importance of a healthy ecosystem forever.

Shark viewing is activity that needs to be done on a small scale in very selective places and small numbers. Going to a location that has an existing population of sharks avoids the need to attract sharks to the location.

Dealing with off shore sharks that are not aggressive, such as Galapagos and Sandbar sharks, prevents the issue of increasing sharks near shore.

#### *2) Ongoing Research*

During every tour, we observe, count and note the number and species of sharks and other animals that pass by the site. We make special notes on the number of tagged and injured sharks, and make observations of all environmental influences such as currents, tides, moon phases, wind and weather. We also report visitations of unusual animals, such as whale sharks and hammer head sharks directly to the HIMB lab, University of Hawaii. This has resulted in years of valuable information that can paint a picture of seasonal trends, behavior patterns and population changes.

#### *3) Building and promoting environmental awareness*

During the tour we have a captive audience. The guests are presented with facts about shark biology and behavior, as well as information about other ocean creatures such as Whales, dolphins and turtles. Much of this they can observe in person during the tour. We discuss the demise of sharks due to the shark fin industry and over fishing, and educate the guests on the crucial role sharks play as a top predator in a healthy ocean environment. We especially emphasize the fact that we cannot have a healthy ocean without sharks, as they control fish populations and keep the oceans clean. We pick up floating debris, we also ask guests to note and report animals with hooks in their mouths and old fishing lines choking part of their bodies (which we see almost every day). At the end of the tour we hand out information on how to get involved in non-profit organizations and tips on what each individual can do to help.

#### *4) A positive experience for everyone*

Every person that steps off our boat leaves with a new appreciation for the ocean and a deep respect for sharks. Having a personal encounter is the most powerful lesson that will stay with them forever. No matter what attitude they brought with them at the beginning of the tour, once they enter the water and see the peaceful and graceful way the sharks swim through the open blue water, they can't help but replace their false images of the "Jaws" monster. They also have a chance to see the many fish that will also visit the site, such as Mahi Mahi, tuna, barracuda, opelu, dolphins and whales.

Peering out into the blue instills everyone with the utmost reverence for sharks and they leave, deeply moved by the serenity of the clear blue ocean of Hawaii.

### **5) Financial benefit for conservation and people**

A portion of our proceeds goes directly to non-profit organizations to support shark research, educational projects and legislative efforts to strengthen ocean conservation.

The time and effort given to everyday observation and research could never be replaced by traditional research projects. Combining research with a commercial operation is the only way to realistically support long-term observation.

Our intentions for growth are not aimed towards increasing the tour operation. We have chosen to keep this part of our business small, limiting it to one boat. This supports the company and employees and all research efforts. All future development of the company is targeted towards the task of education and conservation and the effort of changing the negative image of sharks.

### **6) Financial benefit for the local community**

Not only do we provide jobs to local residents, we also make a point to send our guests to the businesses in Haleiwa, after they leave the tour. We offer free educational tours to the North shore schools and have special educational programs that include school presentations as well as field trips.

We are an active member of the North Shore Chamber of Commerce and support non-profit organizations locally and internationally.

We donated money to Waialua High School to start a Marine Science Program and are offering ongoing help through donations and fund raising efforts to expand the program. We are in the process of implementing similar programs in other local schools and are working on developing an outreach program.

Our future plans involve the establishment of a Shark and Ocean curriculum that will make it possible to for people to learn outside the school system through evening classes, training programs, volunteer opportunities etc.

By joining efforts with other organizations we hope to bring ocean oriented safety and training classes to the North Shore. The subjects will cover anything from First Aid, Jr. life guard and Naturalist classes to spearfishing/freediving techniques and safety procedures and marine biology classes. This will also help develop a network of volunteers that can take presentations and courses to schools as well as other islands.

### **7) Raising awareness for a better way of life – with nature, not against nature. The Hawaiian way of life.**

Every day we take out guests from all over the world and show them that Hawaii is still one place where ocean creatures can find some protection and live in a natural environment. It sets an example of what can be done when nature is not overpowered by human development. This goes along with the fact that the North Shore has many other examples of living green and that the community truly is attempting to live with nature, instead of battling nature.

We also try to convey the deep spiritual connection people of the islands have with the ocean and hope to give guests a new perspective that can improve their own lives.

We don't have to preach. Just simply giving people a chance to enter the blue and be in the ocean leaves them changed forever. Every day the experience with the sharks inspires young people to dedicate their careers to ocean sciences and marine biology, or to simply live with more care and love for the environment.

It also leaves people humbled and aware that life is about more than just their own concerns.

## Research through Shark Encounters

Attachment C

To learn about a wild population of ocean animals you have to go out and spend time observing the ocean, the environment and circumstances, day after day. Watching from the surface is not a perfect method, but it is a start. Combined with scientific studies in a controlled environment, the field research of tagging and tracking, and the observations of divers and swimmers, the picture becomes more complete.

Shark research is chronically under funded and letting commercial fishing be the only means of data collection is not acceptable for obvious reasons.

A better understanding of shark populations is the only way to manage fisheries, to improve public safety and to truly understand and protect a species that is vital to a healthy ocean and therefore to our quality of life.

It has become obvious that shark tours are a most effective tool in educating the public.

Combining research with a commercial operation is the only way to realistically support long-term observation.

### *The Status of Shark Conservation in Hawaii*

The only move towards shark conservation in Hawaii has been a ban of shark finning in Hawaii State waters.

Sharks are still slaughtered just outside the state line and brought in without restrictions to be transshipped or sold on the local market.

Container loads filled with shark fins can still be found in Honolulu harbor.

### *The global challenge*

The general misconception is that there are still plenty of sharks. It is rare to find sympathy for an animal that most people are terrified of.

Sharks have a bad reputation that is undeserved and incorrect.

This makes it possible for the slaughter of sharks by the millions to continue, when it should cause a global outrage.

***The decimation of sharks has been identified as one of the top ten critical issues we face in ocean conservation.***

More research is needed to find out important information about the biology of individual shark species, and how the current fishing practices will affect their populations. One thing is clear, because sharks are slow to mature and reproduce in very low numbers, the populations will hit a point of no return much faster than any other fish species that is hunted extensively. Many shark species are already nearing a point of decimation that will be difficult to stop and reverse.

Sharks are unpopular animals in comparison to whales, dolphins and the cuter varieties of ocean creatures, which it more difficult to find support and funding for research.

Hawaii has become a haven for whales and turtles, and could soon be one of the last places where sharks haven't been decimated, even though the numbers are dwindling quickly. The North Shore of Oahu is one place where one can still experience a clean and healthy ocean with all its fascinating inhabitants.

Every healthy system needs predators. And sharks are one of the most important links in the ocean ecosystem.

### *So why should we protect them?*

Sharks keep our oceans healthy and clean. Without sharks the oceans would be a cesspool of the sick, dying and dead. Fisheries would collapse. The balance would be disturbed to an extent that can't even be completely predicted.

The elimination of sharks would impact the environment and economy on a global scale. When we recognize that we have to respect and protect sharks we are also taking one step towards saving the oceans!

*How can we ever reverse the negative image of sharks?*

The media plays a huge role. Obviously the movie “Jaws” has shaped the way several generations see sharks. It will take a lot to reverse this image.

However, nothing is as effective as a personal experience. That’s why we are so passionate about bringing people out in the ocean to see sharks. Once you see the true nature of these graceful animals, you will not go home with the same attitude.

The next generation of marine biologists and shark researchers will come from the passion that is sparked by personal experiences in the ocean.

It is more powerful and lasting than anything on TV or in print.

Seeing an animal in a tank is interesting, observing them in the wild is inspirational.

Whale watching has already shown that as a successful example.

*Parts of the proceeds of Hawaii Shark Encounter tours go directly towards funding shark research.*

Hawaii Shark Encounters also works closely with a non-profit organization for sharks called Shark Allies, as well as other organizations around the globe.

We would like to encourage you to find out more about the urgent issues that affect shark conservation by going to [SharkAllies.org](http://SharkAllies.org)

## Shark Conservation, Education

Looking at sharks in aquariums, trapped inside a tank for easy viewing, is one way to educate, but anyone that has seen sharks in the wild will see that a caged animal has little left of its spirit and it's natural behavior. It leaves barely an impression.

The emotional impact of observing them in the open ocean affects people on a completely different level. You have to experience it to understand it.

Shark tours give people a chance to enter the ocean safely and in a controlled manner. Placing the guests inside a cage to view the sharks in their natural environment is the least disruptive and safest method to accomplish this.

To teach people about the true nature of sharks is the only way they will learn to respect sharks, especially if they do not come from a society that has an inherent reverence for the ocean, such as the Hawaiians.

It is a long and difficult step to move away from the image of the shark as a monster, pest or at the least, a nuisance.

Seeing a shark strung up on the dock and presenting it as a trophy is still one of the preferred ways people would like to encounter the animal.

Moving on to a new and more enlightened image of an animal that should be admired and protected is a task of overwhelming proportions.

If the majority of the world could understand and live by the views of the native Hawaiian culture, then sharks would not be endangered. Unfortunately that will never be the case.



## Other activities

## Attachment E

Waikiki Midnight shark hunt operates in State waters, near the most populated areas of Waikiki and Hawaii Kai.

Spear fishing goes on regularly right in the surf zone, where bleeding and struggling fish could attract sharks into the shallows.

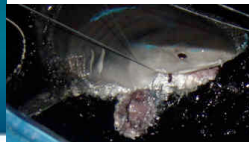
Every day fishermen clean their catch and throw guts and carcasses over board, either right outside the harbor or even right next to the dock. Fishing is an honorable practice as it provides the people with food and money. But it doesn't automatically exclude the practice from having an impact, whether it is intended or not.

**None of those activities are considered an issue, and they probably aren't.**

They have been going on for many years without any great impact on shark behavior. But how can we set that standard and then single out and condemn a tour that looks at sharks three miles off shore?

The more worrisome double standards comes with the fact that **it is perfectly legal to kill sharks, but not to look at them, even if the methods are the same.**

It is even commonly accepted to shoot them with a gun or kill them with bang sticks with the justification that they are a pest or disrupting the activity.



Statistics  
Shark Attacks and Other Ocean Recreation  
Accidents and Deaths

**Shark Attacks**

**Data from International Shark Attack file**

Despite continued human population growth and increased interest in aquatic recreation, the number of shark attacks has generally leveled off (averaging 63) worldwide since reaching a high of 79 in 2000.

<u>Hawaii Attack Activity since 1990</u>	<u>Last fatal attacks in Hawaii:</u>
1992 - 9 attacks (all non fatal)	1 in 2004
1999 - 5 attacks (all non fatal)	2 in 1992
2003 - 5 attacks (all non fatal)	
2007 - 7 attacks (all non fatal)	

**NOAA Fisheries Fact Sheet**

**Is There an Increase in the Number of Sharks and Attacks?** In 2001, there were 76 recorded unprovoked shark attacks in the U.S., versus 86 in 2000. According to the International Shark Attack File, the numbers of shark bites from year-to-year seem to be directly associated with increased numbers of humans swimming, diving and surfing in the ocean.

**Drowning**

According to **State of Hawaii Dept of Health** from 1993-1997 there were 306 drownings in the state over the 5-year period. Nearly half (139) occurred on the island of Oahu. Of this total, 147 were noted to occur near the shore (128 near beaches, 13 in harbors, and 6 in canals), and 39 occurred offshore. Not surprisingly, swimming was the most common activity associated with drowning (18% of all incidents). Thirty six of the victims were fishing at the time of drowning, including at least 9 of whom were fishing from the shore and were swept out to sea. Another 9 victims were gathering `opihi at the time of drowning. Other common activities were scuba diving (23 victims), snorkeling (20) and surfing or body boarding (17)

**--- Center of Disease Control and Prevention---**

**Water -Related Injuries**

In 2005, there were 3,582 fatal unintentional drownings in the United States, averaging ten deaths per day. An additional 710 people died, from drowning and other causes, in boating-related incidents.

More than one in four fatal drowning victims are children 14 and younger.

**Scuba Diving / Breath hold diving**

There are an average of 150 fatalities per year in **scuba diving** in the US alone. **Breath-Hold Diving** DAN (Divers Alert Network ) began data collection in 2005 to document fatal and nonfatal breath-hold incidents in 2004. In that year, 22 fatalities and one nonfatal case were reported from nine countries. Twelve occurred in three U.S. states: California and Hawaii (each 42 percent) and Florida (17 percent).

**Kite boarding**

54 kiteboarder deaths worldwide have been reported to date since 2000.

## Jet ski incidents

Chicago Sun Times report

“The estimated number of jet ski injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms increased from 2,860 in 1990 to 12,288 in 1995.”

The U.S. Coast Guard found in 2002 that a personal watercraft operator is seven times more likely to get hurt than a motor boat operator and 30 times more likely than a canoer or kayaker. Collisions with docks, larger boats and other personal watercraft account for more than 65% of all reported injuries. Collisions often occur when operators attempt to jump the wake generated by another vessel.

## Boating

### Boating Accidents and Fatalities Compared to Shark Attacks and Fatalities

<u>State</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Number of Boating Accidents</u>	<u>Number of Boating Fatalities</u>	<u>Number of Shark Attacks</u>	<u>Number of Shark Attack Fatalities</u>
<i>Alabama</i>	1995-2007	1,384	250	4	0
<i>California</i>	1995-2007	9,872	658	33	2
<i>Georgia</i>	1995-2007	1,778	203	4	0
<i>Florida</i>	1995-2007	12,787	839	333	4
<i>Hawaii</i>	1995-2007	209	30	45	1
<i>North Carolina</i>	1995-2007	2,288	279	23	1
<i>Oregon</i>	1995-2007	2,075	196	7	0
<i>South Carolina</i>	1995-2007	1,506	256	35	0
<i>Texas</i>	1995-2007	2,499	598	18	0
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>34,398</b>	<b>3,309</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Number per Year (average)</b>		<b>2,646.0</b>	<b>254.5</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>0.6</b>

### Sand Hole Collapse Fatalities Compared To Shark Attack Fatalities in the U.S.: 1990-2006

<u>Incident</u>	<u>Number of Fatalities</u>
Sand Hole Collapse <sup>1</sup>	16
Shark Attack <sup>2</sup>	11

Source of boating accident data: U.S. Coast Guard

Source of shark attack data: International Shark Attack File, Sept 1, 2008

Source of sand hole data: Dr. Bradley Maron, The New England Journal of Medicine (June 2007)

DLNR Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation – State of Hawaii  
(PWC = Personal Water craft)

U.S. COAST GUARD PWC ACCIDENT STATISTICS: 1987-1998					
YEAR	PWC SALES*	PWC IN USE **	PWC IN ACCIDENTS	PWC INJURIES	PWC FATALITIES
1987	29,000	92,756	376	156	5
1988	48,000	126,881	650	254	20
1989	64,000	178,510	844	402	20
1990	72,000	241,376	1,162	532	28
1991	68,000	305,915	1,513	708	26
1992	79,000	372,283	1,650	730	34
1993	107,000	454,545	2,236	915	35
1994	142,000	600,000	3,002	1,338	56
1995	200,000	760,000	3,986	1,617	68
1996	191,000	900,000	4,099	1,837	57
1997	176,000	1,000,000	4,070	1,812	84
1998	130,000	1,100,000	3,607	1,743	78
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>27,195</b>	<b>12,044</b>	<b>511</b>
*Estimates from the National Marine Manufacturers Association					
** Estimates from the Personal Watercraft Industry Association					

**US Department of Homeland Security - United States Coast Guard document**

**Recreational Boating Statistics 2007**

**2007 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**NATIONAL RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY PROGRAM**

- When comparing 2006 and 2007, the number of deaths dropped from 710 to 685. However, other casualty figures increased: accidents rose from 4967 to 5191, injuries rose from 3474 to 3673, and damages rose from \$43,670,424 to \$53,106,496.
- Over two-thirds of all fatal boating accident victims drowned, and of those, ninety (90) percent were not wearing a life jacket.
- Only fourteen (14) percent of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had received boating safety instruction.
- Three out of every four boaters who drowned were using vessels less than 21 feet in length.
- Operator inattention, careless/reckless operation, passenger/skier behavior, excessive speed, and alcohol use rank as the top five primary contributing factors in accidents.
- Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents; it was listed as the leading factor in 21% of the deaths.
- Sixteen (16) children age 12 and under lost their lives while boating in 2007, compared to 29 children in 2006 and 21 children in 2005. Half (8) of the children who died in 2007 died from drowning.
- The most common types of vessels involved in reported accidents were open motorboats (44%), personal watercraft (24%), and cabin motorboats (15%). The number of deaths associated with the use of canoes/kayaks increased to 107 in 2007 as compared with 99 in 2006.
- The 12,875,568 vessels registered by the States in 2007 represent a one percent increase from last year when 12,746,126 vessels were registered.

**Doug Perrine**, M.A. Marine Biology and Fisheries  
Author, "Sharks"  
Author, "Sharks and Rays of the World"

**Statement G1**

Just as whale-watching tours were the essential ingredient that galvanized the “save the whales” movement, helped policy makers see the economic value of live resources, and led to the protection of the great whales in the nick of time to save many populations from extirpation, shark watching tours are essential to the conservation of a large group of related species that are gravely threatened as a result of unsustainable exploitation. Shark populations in Hawaii and worldwide are threatened with collapse, with unknown consequences to marine ecosystems from the removal of these apex predators, some of which may serve as keystone species.

Shark-watching tours are educational, fun, contribute to the economy, create jobs, and most importantly lead to an increased appreciation for a very under-appreciated, but important, group of marine animals. Participants on these tours often experience a complete reversal of the type of blind prejudices that lead to misplaced and irrational fears, which in turn lead to poor management decisions to the detriment of shark populations, the environment, and to viable, sustainable ecotourism businesses. Despite high levels of public concern, and resultant intense scrutiny, no detrimental effects to public safety or to the marine environment have been shown from the shark tours currently operating on Oahu’s North Shore.

Fears of calamitous results from the baiting of sharks for viewing purposes ignore the fact that large scale baiting of sharks occurs every day, all over Hawaii and around the world, due to fishing activities. Are we to believe that the fact that these fishers do not drop a cage into the water and have a look at the sharks they attract is the only factor preventing us from disaster as a result of this shark baiting?

For politicians to ignore the evidence that shark tourism in Hawaii has had no known harmful effects, and has in fact been beneficial to our state and pander to public hysteria and ban these would confirm the worst stereotype of politicians. It would harm our economy and harm an important component of the marine ecosystem. Policy makers should instead concentrate on protecting these vulnerable animals, which are being killed every day in Hawaii, often for no good purpose. Many times sharks are killed just for sport, or because they compete for other fish species, and are not even utilized. As slow-growing, long-lived animals with low reproductive rates, they cannot sustain rates of mortality much higher than the natural rate, yet no species of shark is protected in Hawaii. This is a tragedy, which would be compounded if legislators attack educators, rather than protecting sharks.

By contrast to the shark-watching industry in Hawaii, where no harm has been shown to shark or human, in Hawaii’s whale-watching industry there have been deaths of both endangered whales and humans as a direct result of the whale viewing activities. I am not suggesting that whale viewing be banned, but rather pointing out the hypocrisy and discrimination associated with the proposed ban on only one segment of the marine eco-tourism industry. Surely we can do better than this. Why not respond to ignorance and phobias with research and education, rather than craven pandering?

Sincerely,

Doug Perrine

**Marlu O. West / President Save the Sea Turtles International  
Haleiwa , Hawaii**

April 23, 2009

Letter to the Editor IN RESPONSE TO: Letter TO EDITOR April 23  
/SHARK TOURS/Advertiser newspaper & Star Bulletin Views

I have been going on the shark tours on an average of once a month for over four years. Every tour has been a wonderful experience of the deep ocean sea life not available even to scuba divers. I have influenced over a hundred people to go on the Haleiwa shark tours. I have personally offered a money back guarantee, if they are not educated on the plight of the sharks, did not enjoy the adventure and have a life changing experience. No refunds yet. Just lots and lots of thank you letters on file.

The Federal and State “Feeding Activities Ban” is somewhat silly. All the Haleiwa tour operators are required to do to comply or be compliant is: Just kill sharks each time they go out, to legalize their business. The killings would probably increase the Shark Tour business. The only problem is there are not enough sharks left to kill in Hawaii. The Sports Fishing businesses in Hawaii have started to bait, catch and release Marlin and Sailfish. Why? Because there are not many big fish left in the ocean around Hawaii. This is documented.

These educational shark tour businesses in Hawaii have scientific data that shows after years, there is no increase in shark attacks or shark behavior changes. I plead with all our Hawaiian residents that oppose Shark Tours, please take the time to just go on a tour and see for your self and get educated. Then voice your opinions. Discounts are usually available with both tour companies in Haleiwa.

I have not been paid, nor is this the opinion of any business or nonprofit, I represent. This is only my personal opinion and belief.

Marlu O West,  
Resident Haleiwa 36 years.

**Statement G3**

**Patricia Morine**, 81 Ahuwale Pl, Makawao, Maui

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to implore everyone making a decision about the Sharks to go out on the shark tour first, before you make your decision.

I was born and raised on Oahu and spent my life growing up in the ocean. I admit I have been terrified of sharks for a long time. I did not go in the ocean for over a year after seeing "JAWS". That "shark fear" all changed 3 years ago when I went on a shark tour in Haleiwa, with Hawaii Shark Encounters. To see the Sharks in the ocean is indescribable. They are incredible. I instantly became a shark advocate.

We must do everything in our power to save these magnificent animals. I learned so much on the tour and I have been back 4 more times since then. I am no longer afraid while in the water.

I have written our Federal government supporting House and Senate bills banning shark fining. I keep an eye on world events and groups who are trying to save the sharks.

This type of educational shark tour is essential for the opportunity to allow people to see the sharks. To learn about how their populations are being decimated and that they really do need every single voice to help save them.

I also want to be able to have the opportunity to return yearly to Haleiwa and go off shore to see the sharks.

Aloha,

Patricia Morine

**David Fleetham**

Underwater Photographer/ Journalist  
Maui, Hawaii

April 21, 2009

I have spent over thirty years documenting the life in our planets oceans and watched the unwitting decay and deterioration of our marine resources first hand. The situation is dire for sharks as they are being emptied out of our oceans and into bowls of soup at an alarming rate. Sharks have been slaughtered in astonishing numbers to the point where several species are now considered completely wiped out in some areas with little hope of them ever being found there again. A combination of misinformation from Hollywood depicting sharks as blood thirsty killers and ignorance has brought these calm, careful, cautious and magnificent creatures to their collective knees.

Many groups around the world are trying to turn around the misconceptions and bringing people and sharks together is one of the best methods for doing this. Divers and snorklers that have spent some time with these animals in their environment come out of the water with a whole new appreciation for a species that our grand children may not be able to find if something is not done. Shark encounters are available in all oceans now and there is no correlation between these operations and the few shark attacks that occur around the world. Tracking devices have been put on individual sharks and they show that these animals do not leave the area where they are encountered to seek out humans.

As we lose biodiversity in the oceans we come closer to collapsing ecosystems that the entire planet depends upon its existence. Decisions that affect our oceans need to be made from a point of knowledge not senseless paranoia.

David Fleetham



**Linda Tatreau**  
Marine Biology Teacher  
Guam

To Whom it may Concern,

I take this opportunity to enthusiastically support the shark watching tours in Haleiwa, Hawaii. This is a great venture for Haleiwa, for Hawaii and especially, for the sharks. Education is the key to protecting these magnificent fish and there is no better way for people to recognize their magnificence than by seeing them in the open ocean.

The killing of sharks for sport, food, sharkfin soup, cartilage, shark liver oil and out of fear has decimated shark populations around the world. It is estimated that many populations have been reduced by 80% in recent years. Education is vital to protect the remaining shark populations. The popularity of shark fin soup in Asia is keeping the sharks in peril. The shark tour companies provide a great service, educating tourists and locals alike about the importance of sharks. People who take the tour learn that sharks are not the senseless, killing machines the media lead us to believe.

You can read about sharks, look at pictures, see videos, but nothing will tell the story quite like seeing them in their natural environment. I took five Guam high school students to Hawaii a few years ago and we got to see the sharks from safety of the shark cage. After the event, the students said, "Miss, we never knew.... even though you had taught us about the sharks." My students developed a new and powerful respect for these top predators in just an hour at sea.

An understanding of the sharks of the North Shore of Oahu is necessary in considering the pros and cons of this issue. The Galapagos and Sand Bar Sharks have been following the crab fishing boats of the North Shore for over forty years, eating the left over bait that was thrown back in the ocean. It was the crab fishermen who mentioned the sharks to a couple of avid underwater photographers. They swam with the sharks and thought others should experience these majestic creatures. The shark tour business was born of sharks that were already swimming in the waters off the North Shore. Recent studies have shown that the sharks do not follow the boats back to shore.

The employees of the shark boats are well trained and educated regarding sharks and enthusiastically pass their knowledge to their passengers. Please consider the benefits to the community and the sharks when considering the shark tours.

Sincerely,

Linda Tatreau

**Brent Tibbatts**

Department of Agriculture  
Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources  
(671) 735-3987  
Mangilao, Guam 96913

Stefanie, I was a guest of Hawaii Shark Encounters on May 7, 2009. Our crew, Captain Chris and deckhand Cole, were very professional and educational. We were given a description of the sharks we should see, a brief history of their biology, the reason sharks are at the area the tours take place, and background information on shark human interactions in Hawaii. The sharks have been attracted to this area by the actions of commercial fishermen. No shark feeding takes place with this tour, so the sharks are at this site regardless of the presence or absence of this company. Several of the sharks are tagged, and valuable research into their biology and life history is ongoing. The customers were instructed to keep all arms and legs inside the shark cage, or they would be asked to exit the water. In addition, the crew showed their concern for the environment by retrieving a large mass (around 50 pounds) of floating net during our return to the dock.

As a fisheries biologist on Guam, I have seen fish tours that do not practice socially and environmentally sound policies. Feeding of fish, including potentially dangerous fish such as barracudas, allowing customers to damage the environment, and leaving trash behind after visiting a site. In my opinion, Hawaii Shark Encounters gets it right. They promote and practice social and environmental responsibility during their tour, and provide a valuable educational resource as well. If a company were to consider opening a similar operation on Guam, I would use the Hawaii Shark Encounters experience as a model for how the business should be run.

Sincerely,  
Brent Tibbatts

--

Hannes Jaenicke, ZDF Germany  
Writer/Producer 'The Last Witnesses'

Dear Stefanie.

We've just finished the final cut of our shark documentary ('The Last Witnesses') for the ZDF and I just wanted to express how thankful we are for your incredible support. This conservation documentary turned out fabulous thanks to the material we shot with 'Shark Encounters'. The head of programming at ZDF, Thomas Bellut, actually said he's never seen shark footage like the one we shot with you. Not in 'Shark Waters' or any of the South African shark films. He'll submit the film to several festivals and expects world sales to be far beyond average. Our film will air prime time in August and Bellut is convinced it'll even beat the ratings of our pilot film about the demise of Orang-Utans. Without you and 'Shark Encounters' we would have never gotten the film we have now.

I also wanted to let you know that the re-runs of our 2007 Vox Tours program about Oahu and its tourist attractions were watched by over 4 million viewers. Vox shortened the film to a half hour format, cutting out the section about Waikiki, the parasailing, the jet skiing and big game fishing. The film now focuses on the footage regarding traditional Hawaiian culture and all the environmental activities going on in Hawaii, prominently featuring Jack Johnson's involvement and of course 'Shark Encounters'.

Consequently we're discussing a sequel of 'Vox Tours Hawaii', planning to start principal photography in September or October 2009. Would you be willing and able to help us out again? That would be fantastic. Please let me know. And I'll send you a DVD of the ZDF film as soon as it has aired in summer. Thank you again, and please stay in touch.

With best regards,

Hannes Jaenicke

**Marty Snyderman**  
**Excerpts from**  
**“TAKING THE BAIT-The Real Value of Shark Dives”**

Sharks will make an impression on you that you'll never forget. Lucky me, I've seen this sight dozens of times. Of course, one of the main reasons I consider myself so lucky is that when I saw a sight like this, I was inside the protective confines of a shark cage.

The reason I appreciate the experience is not just because of the photographic opportunities. What I cherish the most about the experience is being able to see animals as magnificent as a great white shark in the wild, and I wish everyone had the opportunity. It's from personal connections like these that we muster the motivation to protect a species, as well as the ocean itself. And these days, they can use our help. Nothing Like the Real Thing.

I have been diving around sharks and other large animals in a variety of settings for roughly 30 years. I've also given slide presentations and shared my shark-diving experiences with a lot of groups during that time.

But no matter how passionate I am about sharks, how well my presentations are received by audiences, or how much some scientist or other conservationist tries to impress upon people just how fascinating sharks are, how much trouble they are in, why they are vital to healthy marine ecosystems and what we must do to save them, the feelings generated by words and pictures are not nearly as intense as they are when divers come face to face with these sharks in the wild.

There is something that happens deep down in our souls when we see animals in this setting. It's different from the perspective we get from watching television or attending a presentation, no matter who the speaker is.

I would love to think that my work could have the same influence on people as an up-close-and-personal encounter, but I know better. The connection is so much stronger when you see, smell, hear and taste it, and real life makes the most enduring impression. The Heroes of Future Generations- There is another, perhaps far more important value in shark dives. I'm 100 percent convinced that if there is any hope for the future of shark populations around the world, a bunch of people who are much younger than me (I'm 58) are going to have to carry the torch. We need, the oceans need and sharks need people to fall in love with them the way that my generation has. Clearly, those younger shark lovers already exist. I've met and dived with some of them and corresponded with many more, but there can never be too many. Our oceans can use all the champions and saviors that they can get.

As the saying goes, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and in the battle for the future of sharks we need to keep squeaking. Loudly. And so will the next generation, and the one after that, and the one after that.

For that reason I think it's worthwhile to give young people who might turn into the shark heroes of tomorrow the opportunity to fall in love with sharks today. The variety of shark-diving expeditions - caged or uncaged, baited or unbaited - that occurs in such places as California, the Caribbean, Australia, Yap and Fiji provide that opportunity.

**Richard Theiss** , Film maker/Conservationist/Journalist

Excerpts from online RTS blog “Oahu, Hawaii: future shark ecotourism threatened”

Once again, because of lack of foresight combined with glaring local media coverage, shark ecotourism has taken another hit, this time as a local issue in Hawaii with implications that could impact responsible operators statewide.

The critics are citing the two common arguments in opposition to shark ecotourism:

First issue: feeding disrupts the sharks' normal feeding behavior. Well, it's not that simple. There are many recognized shark researchers who will support the contention that, unless done with high frequency and volume, sharks will *not* become detrimentally dependent on the food sources of shark ecotourism operations.

The other criticism leveled is that shark ecotourism makes the sharks associate humans as a food source. This accusation plays on the fears the uninformed public has about sharks and once again there are experts who will debunk the myth. As a filmmaker, I have been exposed to sharks much more so than the typical cage-bound diver and I have yet to see a shark behave in a manner that says because of bait in the water it has re-programmed itself to select humans as a primary food source. In addition to my open ocean activities with sharks, I have spent over 8 years in aquarium settings feeding fish in the presence of sharks or feeding sharks specifically and never did I see the sharks make the A=B connection (food=humans) that critics propose.

One of the [news articles](#) cited a comment from a critic at the meeting who compared the situation to the dangers of feeding bears at Yellowstone Park. Apples and oranges. Mammalian intelligence is different from shark intelligence. Bears have a broader taste palette and due to their foraging through trash can develop a taste for the foods we eat. While it is true that bears can attack humans and even develop a taste for human flesh, that has not proven to be the case with sharks: we are not on their menu.

For any successful ecotourism operation there is *site selection* (as with any business: location, location, location). I'm not familiar with Maunaloa Bay, but perhaps it is not the best location for viewing sharks.

Human use density, shark biodispersion/density, dock facilities in relationship to other tourist activities (politics) - all have to be considered beforehand. And consideration must be given as to the *species of sharks* the operation intends to attract and the *methods* by which it will be done.