

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Scientific Authority
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
Record of Advice on Export Permit Application

Application number: 97483c Date DSA: 6/28/2018

DMA Contact: Adrienne Lohe

Applicant: [REDACTED]

Specimens and species: One (1) live, wild-caught bentfin devil ray (*Mobula thurstoni*)

Recipient: [REDACTED]

Type of permit: Appendix II export

ADVICE

After examining the above permit application, we find that the proposed export will
not be detrimental to the survival of the species,

Background

The genus *Mobula* was listed in CITES Appendix II (CoP17 Prop. 44) on January 2, 2017 with an effective implementation date of April 4, 2017 (UNEP-WCMC 2018). Trade in this genus is primarily for the gill plates which are sold for use in traditional Chinese medicine but there is also some limited live trade for use in the aquarium industry. *Mobula thurstoni* are targeted commercially, especially in Peru, the Philippines, Mexico, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, and occurs as bycatch in gillnet, purse seine, and longline fisheries throughout the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans. The *Mobula* spp. listing was complimentary to the *Manta* spp. listing at CoP16 (2013) that put the two species of Manta rays, *Manta birostris* (the giant oceanic manta) and *Manta alfredi* (the resident reef manta), into Appendix II. Both Manta ray species, and all nine species of *Mobula*, are targeted in fisheries directed at obtaining these species' gill plates. Until the Mobulid rays were given CITES Appendix II protection at CoP17, harvest for the international trade in their gill plates was largely unregulated. A single mature *Mobula* can yield up to 3.5 kilos of dried gills and this commodity retails for as much as US\$557 per kilo in China (CoP17 Prop. 44).

Mobula thurstoni is native to tropical, subtropical, and temperate waters of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans and probably occurs in many other locations from which it has not yet been identified. It is primarily pelagic or epipelagic, occurring in shallow, productive, neritic waters of less than 100 m in depth, but it is also encountered in offshore pelagic waters and around seamounts in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. The species has a patchy distribution and is generally

encountered singly, or in small groups of two to six individuals; it is not known to occur in schools. This species is a relatively large representative of the *Mobula* genera, reaching a maximum disc width of approximately 180 cm. It matures at between 5-6 years and has a minimum life span of approximately 14 years. There is little species specific population data available but overall the species' populations are believed to be in decline. In the 2016 IUCN Red List assessment, this species was evaluated as near threatened, the same assessment as the species received in its 2006 Red List review (Walls et al. 2016).

In Florida, wild-caught marine life is regulated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, Florida Division of Marine Fisheries Management as authorized in Chapter 68B-42 of the Florida Administrative Code (<https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=68B-42>). These codes outline regulations which must be followed in order to legally harvest marine life in Florida waters. Under Florida regulations, *Mobula thurstoni* is included in the Florida Marine Prohibited Species Policy (FWC Rule 68B-8.009, F.A.C) that prohibits harvest without a special, state issued permit. These codes also indicate that those who commercially harvest marine species in Florida waters are required to possess a Commercial Saltwater Products License (SPL) with the Restricted Species (RS) and Marine Life Dive Permit (MLD) endorsements. Wholesalers and retailers are required to obtain separate Saltwater Products Licenses.

Basis for advice

1) The applicant, Dynasty [REDACTED] [REDACTED] requests authorization to export one (1) live, wild-caught bentfin devil ray (*Mobula thurstoni*), to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. This specimen will be put on public exhibit in a public aquarium [REDACTED].

2) [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is a Federally Licensed Wildlife Importer/Exporter and is properly licensed in Florida with a valid SPL including the RS and MLD endorsements. They also hold current Florida Saltwater Products Wholesale and Retail licenses. In addition, they maintain a current Florida Saltwater Products Vessel Decal for each of their harvesting vessels. The applicant therefore holds all permits required by the Florida Division of Marine Fisheries Management to harvest various marine life in Florida waters. The applicant has also obtained a special species-specific permit which allows them to legally harvest the Mobulid rays referenced in this permit. Previously, this office has issued this applicant several export permits for wild harvested dwarf and lined seahorses, live hammerhead sharks and for devil rays.

3) The specimens to be exported are native to the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, and in the United States are native to Florida coastal waters. The specimens will be collected from the wild, in the Tampa Bay or Panama City Beach areas, under Florida permitting and licensing authority, only after this export permit has been issued. Once collected, the specimens will be maintained at the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for up to eight weeks prior to shipment.

Based upon the information provided in this application, we find that the harvest and export of this one (1) *Mobula thurstoni* specimen will **not be detrimental** to the survival of the species.

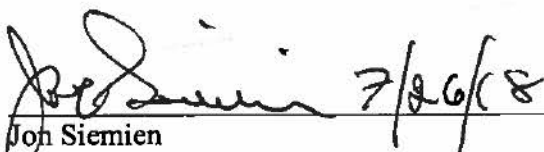
References


CoP17 Prop. 44. 2016. Inclusion of all species of the genus *Mobula* (*Mobula* spp.) in Appendix II of CITES. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)-Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. 40 pp. Online at: <<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/prop/060216/E-CoP17-Prop-44.pdf>>. [Accessed July 24, 2018].

FWC Rule 68B-8.009, F.A.C. September, 2009.
(http://myfwc.com/media/290191/SAL_MarineProhibitedSpeciesPolicy.pdf).

UNEP-WCMC. 2018. UNEP-WCMC Species+ Database: *Mobula thurstoni*. On the World Wide Web (https://www.speciesplus.net/#/taxon_concepts/68409/legal)

Walls, R.H.L., Pardo, S.A., Bigman, J.S., Clark, T.B., Smith, W.D. & Bizzarro, J.J. 2016. *Mobula thurstoni* (errata version published in 2016). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2016: e.T60200A100016879. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2016-1.RLTS.T60200A3091468.en>. Downloaded on 24 July 2018.


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