

United States Senate

ARMED SERVICES
HOMELAND SECURITY
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
BUDGET
SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON AGING

May 7, 2021

Benjamin Friedman
Deputy Under Secretary for Operations
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Friedman:

This week, shocking images emerged showing boaters capturing and allegedly abusing a young tiger shark in Citrus County, Florida¹. These images are abhorrent and do not reflect the overwhelming respect and appreciation that Floridians have for our natural habitats and the species that call them home.

During my time as Governor of Florida, and now U.S. Senator, I have worked directly with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to protect our environment, properly manage our natural resources, and hold bad actors accountable. I understand that FWC is actively investigating the shocking photos from this incident and while that agency is certainly the proper investigative authority, I write today to encourage you to work collaboratively with FWC in any way possible to ensure those deliberately mistreating our wildlife are held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. This is an important opportunity to build on state and federal partnerships and I ask that you make sure your agency stands fully prepared to offer any assistance requested.

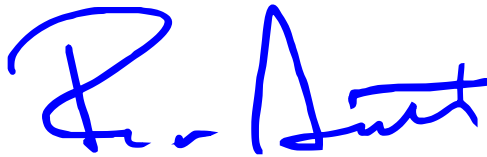
Last month, I was proud to join Senator Marco Rubio and my colleagues in reintroducing the *Sustainable Shark Fisheries and Trade Act*. It is our hope that the United States Senate will quickly take up and pass this important legislation that both protects Florida's law-abiding and hardworking commercial fisherman while protecting sharks from the horrific abuse we've seen occur in other parts of the world. Responsible and ethical fishing practices are key to conservation and I'll keep fighting at the federal level to ensure we protect our treasured marine ecosystems and wildlife.

¹ <https://www.wfla.com/news/local-news/citrus-county/photos-of-apparent-tiger-shark-in-citrus-county-river-spark-fwc-investigation/>

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As a Floridian, I was disgusted when I learned of this incident. Our wildlife deserves to be protected and no animal in Florida deserves to be mistreated as these photos depict. I will continue to work every day to ensure that all of Florida's natural treasures are respected. Floridians have zero tolerance for the mistreatment of our wildlife.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott", with a stylized, cursive script.

Rick Scott
United States Senator