



For immediate release 11 November 2008

## Award winning project counts almost 10,000 sharks

The Australian Underwater Federation won a major award at the Recfish Australian conference for **project of the year**. This is a huge recognition for excellent initiatives and could not have been possible without the support of the Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program. "The winners were worthy recipients and deserved to be recognised as there has been thousands of hours dedicated to the project." Said Bruce Schumacher, Chairman.

The Great Australian Shark Count is the largest community shark monitoring project in the world and has recorded 9,843 shark sightings. There most common sightings of sharks are: Port Jackson (1773), Wobbeong (1526), White Tip Reef (1318) and the endangered Grey Nurse Shark (1098). Only twenty (20) Great White Sharks have been sighted by divers and fishers.

"The Great Australian Shark Count is a fantastic example of a community engagement marine monitoring program." Recfishwest, Acting Executive Director, Mr Kane Moyle said. "Enlisting the help of recreational fishers and divers in data collection makes perfect sense as they are the people that spend the most time on the water." Mr Moyle said.

Recent social research by Dr Stephen Sutton from James Cook University found that 93% of people surveyed were concerned about the future of shark populations and 90% believed we need more information on shark populations. The major threats to sharks were perceived to be commercial fishing (87%), habitat loss (55%), and marine pollution (51%); minor threats were attributed to recreational line fishing (73%); and no threat to sharks was attributed to spearfishing (68%) and SCUBA diving (62%). Only 18% (or 1 in 5) people believe that current management of shark populations is adequate to ensure their sustainability.

The AUF are holding their 4<sup>th</sup> dedicated shark counting weekend on November 15-16. "We are hoping for hundreds of keen skin and SCUBA divers and fishers to be involved by logging shark sightings on the programs website ([www.auf.com.au](http://www.auf.com.au))" Dr Smith said. All major participants become eligible for some fantastic incentives such as posters, stickers, sunglasses, t-shirts and wetsuits. There will also be a WA launch for the project held at AQWA – The Aquarium of Western Australia from 7-9pm on Friday 14th, with guest speakers and exciting award winning shark footage, cocktail food and giveaways.

To report a shark sighting please go to <http://www.auf.com.au>.

If you require more information or wish to be involved in counting sharks please contact Michael Rupnik, Executive Officer on [shark@auf.com.au](mailto:shark@auf.com.au) or on 0400 367 424

Media enquires to Dr Adam Smith on 0418726584 or Kane Moyle on (08) 9246 3366

---

The Australian Underwater Federation (AUF) is the national governing body for underwater sports such as underwater hockey, SCUBA, snorkel coaching and training, fin swimming, and spearfishing (a small but selective type of recreational fishing). The AUF is a member of Recfish Australia and is committed to working strategically together with all recreational fishers. The mission of the AUF is- *Bring sport, conservation and awareness to the underwater world*