

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mako Sharks Competing in Historic Guy Harvey Great Shark Race Log More Than 22,900 Miles So Far

Race Isn't Without Danger - Two Entrants "Lost" Along the North American Coastline

FORT LAUDERDALE-DAVIE, Fla. — While scientists and thousands of marine science students and the general public follow the online daily satellite tracks and progress of **The Guy Harvey Great Shark Race**, the competitors – a group of young mako sharks – navigate sometimes treacherous waters providing important data useful in fisheries management and conservation.



What started with 11 “contestants” is now down to nine, as two of the tagged mako sharks – the fastest sharks in the ocean – were caught and killed by fishermen.

“We are reporting the loss two competitors in the race,” said Dr. Guy Harvey, marine biologist, world-renowned marine wildlife artist and conservationist. “Like any race, all who start do not necessarily finish. From an original field of 11 makos, we are down to nine with still half of the race to run.”

Human racecar drivers who have mechanical issues with their car can retire from a race, only to compete the next week. In the Great Shark Race if a competitor is out, they are out forever – there’s no race next week for these makos.

In March 2015, Harvey and the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, along with **Nova Southeastern University’s (NSU) [Guy Harvey Research Institute \(GHRI\)](#)** launched an innovative race that allowed businesses and/or individuals to sponsor sharks through the purchase of satellite tags. The tags enable researchers and the public to follow these animals via the Internet as they travel in near real time. The shark that travels the furthest in six months wins, with prizes and bragging rights going to the sponsor.

“We learned from professional racing events that public engagement is the key to win support from the community at large as well as recruit sponsors to help with research,” said Mahmood Shivji, Ph.D., director of the GHRI and a professor at NSU’s [Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography](#).

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As the study has expanded several corporations are now stepping up their support. One of the first to commit to a sponsorship was Sir Richard Branson through his [Virgin Unite Foundation](#), who provided funding to purchase several of the satellite tags used in this research project.

The GHRI has been tagging and tracking mako sharks for the last several years. An interactive [website](#) was created to allow the public and students to follow the travels of the makos and other sharks in open waters. “It’s been a very effective way of combining research, education and entertainment with the end goals of raising public awareness about these amazing sharks while simultaneously producing much needed scientific data to aid marine conservation”, said Harvey.



For the Great Shark Race, an additional website was created that featured just the sponsored, tagged makos that were participating. This site – www.greatsharkrace.com – shows the track the original 11, now nine, sharks have taken since joining the race. The race, according to Shivji, has reached the halfway point and is nearing the home stretch for several competitors over the next couple of months. Hopefully the remaining nine competing makos will make it to the finish line.

The race's most recent loss, a 195-pound male shortfin mako whose tag was sponsored by Palmetto Moon Company, was landed off the heavily fished George's Bank area of Nova Scotia last month. The mako, satellite tagged and released off the coast of Maryland, had raced for 90 days covering some 2,900 miles before being caught in fisheries.

The shortfin mako shark, *Isurus oxyrinchus*, was selected for study because it is captured in commercial and recreational fisheries worldwide and is currently listed as "Vulnerable to Extinction" by the IUCN. It's also the **NSU** mascot.

Shivji said the scientific goal of the race is to provide data on the migratory patterns of this species and shine a spotlight on the incredible distances these sharks swim through the waters of many countries. Without reliable knowledge about the behavior of these sharks, fishery managers are hampered in their management and conservation efforts. The fact two of the makos have been caught only illustrates the dangers these animals face on a daily basis.

Shivji said the loss of two makos in the Great Shark Race is reflected in the GRHI's ongoing global study of tagged mako sharks, where 25% have been caught. GHRI began tracking makos in 2009 as far away as Mexico and New Zealand. Over that period, 12 of 49 satellite-tagged sharks have been caught and prematurely removed from the research.

"It's a surprisingly high total considering the fact that it's a really big ocean out there," he said. "Given the large reductions and declining population trends, makos are in need of better management and conservation. The species is known to travel long distances but hardly anything is known about the details of these movements in terms of their timing, orientation, scales of movement, differences between sexes and sizes and what factors drive these migrations. This knowledge is essential for developing effective conservation measures to protect these sharks from the gauntlet of lines and hooks in areas where they spend a lot of time."

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About Nova Southeastern University (NSU): Located in beautiful Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Nova Southeastern University (NSU) is a dynamic research institution dedicated to providing high-quality educational programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and first-professional degree levels. A private, not-for-profit institution with more than 24,000 students, NSU has campuses in Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers, Jacksonville, Miami, Miramar, Orlando, Palm Beach, and Tampa, Florida, as well as San Juan, Puerto Rico, while maintaining a presence online globally. For more than 50 years, NSU has been awarding degrees in a wide range of fields, while fostering groundbreaking research and an impactful commitment to community. Classified as a research university with "high research activity" by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, NSU is 1 of only 37 universities nationwide to also be awarded Carnegie's Community Engagement Classification, and is also the largest private, not-for-profit institution in the United States that meets the U.S. Department of Education's criteria as a Hispanic-serving Institution. Please visit www.nova.edu for more information.

About NSU's Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography: The college provides high-quality undergraduate and graduate (master's and doctoral degrees and certificates) education programs in a broad range of disciplines, including marine sciences, mathematics, biophysics, and chemistry. Researchers carry out innovative basic and applied marine research programs in coral reef biology, ecology, and geology; fish biology, ecology, and conservation; shark and billfish ecology; fisheries science; deep-sea organismal biology and ecology; invertebrate and vertebrate genomics, genetics, molecular ecology, and evolution; microbiology; biodiversity; observation and modeling of large-scale ocean

circulation, coastal dynamics, and ocean atmosphere coupling; benthic habitat mapping; biodiversity; histology; and calcification. The college's newest building is the state-of-the-art Guy Harvey Oceanographic Center, an 86,000-square-foot structure filled with laboratories; offices; seminar rooms; an auditorium; and indoor and outdoor running sea water facilities. Please visit cnso.nova.edu for more information.