



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

House Bill 97 State Designations - State Shark - Megalodon

Date: March 17, 2026
To: Government, Labor, & Elections Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**
From: Matt Stegman,
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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS House Bill 97** which would designate the Megalodon (*otodus megalodon*) the State Shark of Maryland. While this mighty species has been extinct for millions of years, they remain a unique part of Maryland's natural history and a reminder of what the ancient Chesapeake Bay region was like.¹ Additionally, searching for sharks' teeth has long been a fun and peaceful way for people to explore the Chesapeake Bay.

Megalodon is long extinct, yet its fossil record reminds us of the numerous varieties of sharks that can be found in modern Maryland. In fact, sharks are found throughout the Chesapeake Bay, especially the lower and middle regions, as well as in its tributaries like the Potomac River, with species like sandbar sharks, bull sharks, and sand tiger sharks being most common. There have been sightings of bull sharks as far north as the Patuxent River near Baltimore. The Bay is one of the most important nursery areas on the East Coast for young sandbar sharks.²

While the sight of a 6-inch-long Megalodon tooth can evoke the film *Jaws*, fear not, there are no recorded shark attacks in the Chesapeake Bay and seeing one of these elusive creatures in our waters is actually a welcome sign of a healthy and rebounding ecosystem. However, many of Maryland's shark species are struggling due to a lack of forage fish availability, including key species like menhaden³. Sharks also reproduce much slower than other fish and need sustainable fisheries management to help keep their populations thriving. CBF's advocacy for effective regulation of Maryland's fisheries, restoration work like planting riparian buffers and creating oyster reefs, and advocacy for better stormwater management all help support sharks in the Bay.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 97.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

¹ For more, check out [Megalodon Teeth and the Ancient Chesapeake Bay: An Interview with Dr. Stephen Godfrey • Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#)

² [Sharks • Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#)

³ [Atlantic Menhaden • Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#)

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.