

FWC continues investigation into 'disheartening and disturbing' shark dragging video, thanks concerned citizens



By John Rogers
Published: July 26, 2017, 5:38 pm | Updated: July 26, 2017, 7:16 pm



MANATEE COUNTY, Fla. (WFLA) — The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has identified the four men connected to a horrifying shark dragging video.

The video is cruel and difficult to watch. It depicts a helpless shark being dragged at high speed while the men watch and laugh.

It's sparked outrage nationwide. Here in Florida, FWC is not releasing the names, but they are actively investigating.

The agency is working to determine whether a crime was committed.

The FWC released this statement:

It is too early to speculate as to what, if any, violations took place in this incident. However, the FWC would like to state that the lack of respect shown in this video for our precious natural resources is disheartening and disturbing, and is not representative of conservation-minded anglers around the world.

Captain Mark Quartiano in Miami was the very first person to see the video. Known as 'Mark the Shark,' he's a famous angler, and the four men sent it to him to show off their work.

- **GRAPHIC PHOTO WARNING: Photo sent to Captain Quartiano showing dead shark after it was dragged**

"I was horrified when I saw that I just couldn't believe somebody would do that to an innocent creature like that," said Quartiano.

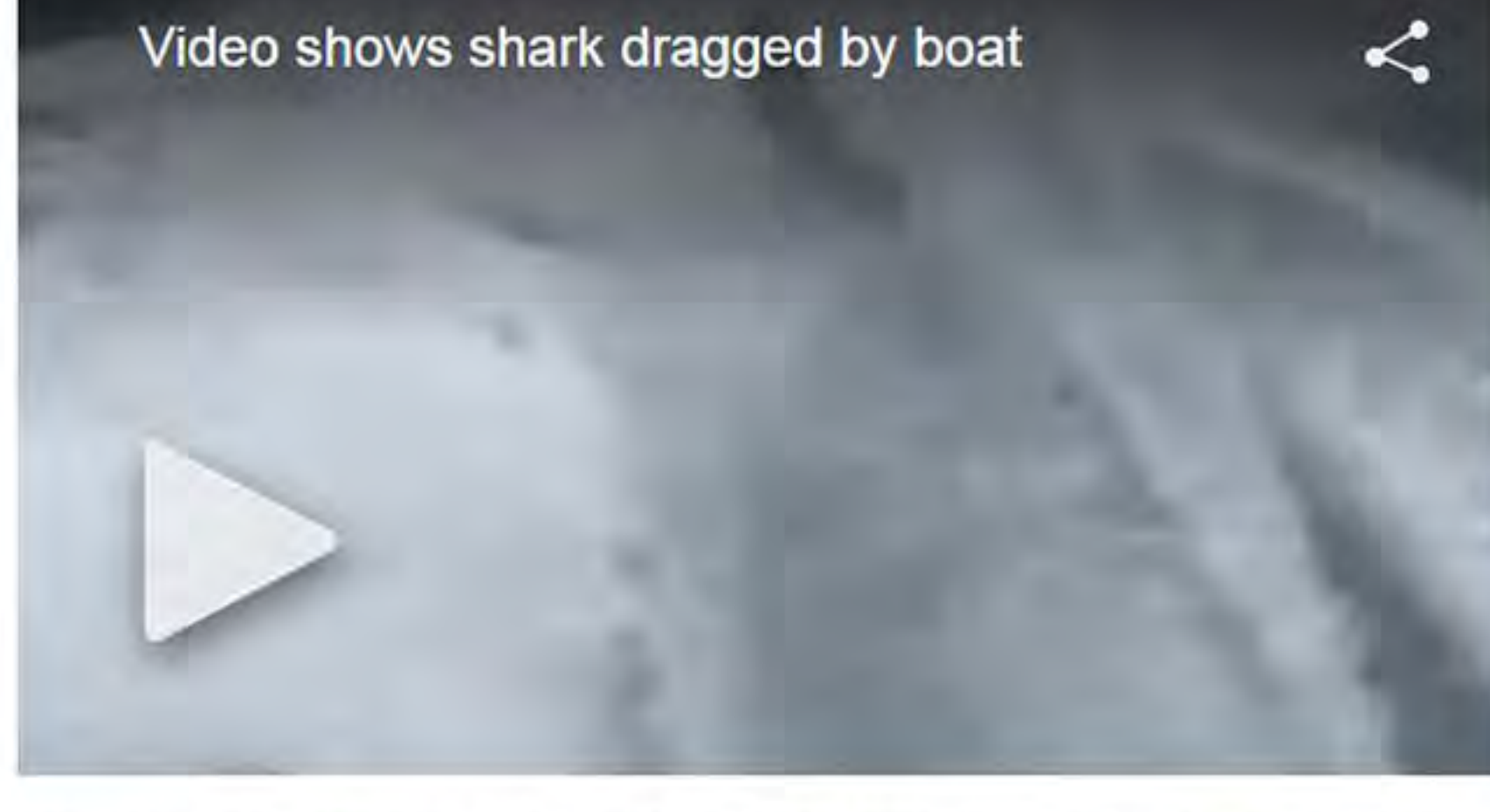
Captain Quartiano said the men also sent him a picture of the shark's aftermath and it was gruesome. The shark was torn apart by the crashing waves. Only the head was left.

He said the men were defending their actions.

"Maybe they wanted me to post it so they could get more followers or something," recalled Quartiano.

"They wanted me to give them my blessing, I think or my approval and go along with their joke because they were laughing the whole time. It's just moronic to ask me to post something when it's borderline illegal, number one, and immoral and just evil," Quartiano added.

Instead, he notified FWC, which did not please these men.



"They came back and wrote a rebuttal to me saying that 'Oh you're a hater! you're a PETA lover!'" he said.

The men in the video have hired Bradenton attorney Jon Weiffenbach, but he refuses to comment on the case.

Dr. Robert Hueter, a world-renown shark expert at Mote Marine Lab is stunned by the video.

"There's just no room for that in our society," said Dr. Hueter.

Dr. Hueter believes this is a black tip shark, and it may have been alive while it was dragged by the tail.

Hueter says the black tip shark is not endangered, but this was certainly cruel to the animal.

"I'm not sure it's illegal, I guess the authorities will figure that out, but it's certainly inhumane, unethical and just makes our species look pretty bad," explained Dr. Hueter.

The expert said the shark was likely dying a slow, painful death.

"When you drag a shark backward by the tail, everything is going backward in terms of its gills, so it can't breathe very efficiently," Dr. Hueter said. "It's not any better than tying a dog to the back of a truck and then dragging it through the desert. It's just plain inhumane, unnecessary and very sad."

Quartiano is infuriated and hopes charges are filed.

"Whatever they did, they crossed the line, they should be punished," said Quartiano.

FWC is also aware that one of the men onboard the boat had previously posted photos on social media showing other cases of possible animal cruelty.

FWC is investigating that as well.

The agency posted on Facebook Wednesday to thank everyone in the public who was concerned and reached out to let them know about the video.



Viral shark video
We want to thank YOU! An overwhelming number of calls, emails, social media messages and posts have been received in response to our request for information about a disturbing video of individuals dragging a shark behind a boat. Our Division of Law Enforcement has now identified the individuals in the video, and are currently conducting an investigation into this incident. Since the investigation is active, we can't confirm the identities of the individuals, and it is too early to speculate as to what, if any, violations took place in this incident. However, we would like to state that the lack of respect shown in this video for our precious natural resources is disheartening and disturbing, and is not representative of conservation-minded anglers around the world.
FWC graphic

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