



californiawhitesharkproject.org

P.O Box 1355
Point Reyes Station, CA
94956

1. Description of Organization

1.1 Type of Organization or Business

The California White Shark Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit led by researchers Dr. Paul Kanive and Scot Anderson. Our mission is to monitor and assess the white shark population off central California. Scot Anderson began white shark research at the Farallon Islands in 1987, and Dr. Kanive has studied white sharks since 2008, specializing in estimating population parameters used to inform policymakers, the scientific community, and the general public. Scot Anderson pioneered the photo-identification method used to identify individual white sharks today. By photographing each shark's uniquely shaped dorsal fin—much like a human fingerprint—researchers can reliably identify and track individual sharks over time.

Together, we have built the world's longest continuous dataset on a white shark population, spanning more than 30 years. Our team has authored or co-authored over 35 peer-reviewed papers that have advanced scientific understanding and informed policy and conservation measures.

1.2 Purpose for Which Organization Was Formed

This project was originally institutionally funded, but monetary support was lost in 2020 due to COVID-related budget cuts. To preserve the continuity of this dataset, we established our independent nonprofit in 2022. Through volunteer labor and limited donations, we have maintained uninterrupted data collection—critical for accurate population analyses and long-term conservation.

1.3 Tax-Exempt Status

IRS Status: 501(c)(3)

1.4 Date Formed as a Nonprofit

7/15/2022

1.5 Membership

- Membership Program: None
- Restrictions: N/A

- Fees: N/A

1.6 Board of Directors & Contact Information

Paul Kanive, PhD — President
Email: paulkanive@gmail.com

Scot Anderson — Vice President
Email: sharkman1137@earthlink.net

Dave Ritter — Treasurer
Email: rittercraft@gmail.com

Maxine Meckfessel – Outreach Coordinator
Email: maxinedianemeck@gmail.com

2. Needs Assessment / Problem Statement

2.1 Clear Statement of the Problem

The California White Shark Project aims to expand our elementary education program into Napa County, building on the success we've had in Sonoma and Marin classrooms. To do this effectively, we must continue funding our core research operations, as the data we collect in the field forms the foundation of the curriculum we bring to students. Our presentations rely on real images, real shark identifications, and real scientific discoveries from our field season—making continued research essential for delivering accurate, engaging, and up-to-date educational content.

White sharks are a keystone predator in California's marine ecosystem, yet their population dynamics remain vulnerable to environmental change, human impacts, and shifting prey availability. Long-term monitoring is essential to detect population trends, assess recovery, and inform state and federal management decisions. In addition, widespread misconceptions and fear-based media portrayals have contributed to public misunderstanding of white sharks and their ecological role. Education is one of the most effective tools to counter misinformation, and our school presentations—successfully implemented in Sonoma and Marin Counties—provide students with accurate, engaging, science-based information about white sharks and our local coastline.

2.2 Specific Objective & Funding Request

Objective:

The objective of this project is to complete a full 2026 white shark research field season (~September to December) and collect high-quality photographic and video identification data on individual sharks along the central/northern California coast. These data will strengthen our long-term population dataset and support updated abundance and demographic estimates for this ecologically critical species.

In addition to our field research, we plan to expand our successful education program—currently offered in Sonoma and Marin Counties—into Napa County classrooms. Our presentations for 3rd–5th grade students provide an engaging, science-based introduction to white sharks, marine ecosystems, and the California coastline. By bringing unique research, images, and scientists into the classroom, we spark curiosity, build environmental literacy, and deepen students’ understanding of local marine wildlife.

Our white shark education program aligns directly with California’s NGSS standards for grades 3–5, including ecosystem dynamics, structure and function, and scientific inquiry. The lessons integrate seamlessly into existing classroom units on marine life, California geography, and human impacts on the environment. Hands-on activities—such as dorsal-fin matching and examining real shark skin and jaws—reinforce NGSS science practices and provide teachers with ready-to-use, standards-aligned instructional content. Moreover, we currently have \$1,500 in funding allocated toward hiring a graduate student who will help us develop our presentation/scientific publications into a lesson plan. This funding was granted to our nonprofit from the West Marin Fund and is budgeted to be 50 hours, at \$30 per hour. This lesson plan will then be downloadable on our website, free, and available to teachers across the US to use in their classrooms.

Funding Request:

\$6,000

We respectfully request **\$6,000** to support our 2027 research and education efforts. The requested funds will be allocated as follows:

- **\$4,500** to cover the costs of **three research expeditions to the Farallon Islands** (\$1,500 per expedition, including vessel charter). Historically, the fee has been \$1,500 but we anticipate this to increase as a result of rising fuel costs.
- **\$1,500** to supplement our existing funding for our graduate student. The originally budgeted 50 hours will not be sufficient to complete the development of our classroom lesson plans, and these additional funds will ensure the project can be completed.

2.3 Anticipated Results & Timeline

Timeline:

- September–December 2026: Field sampling (approx. 35 sampling days between the Farallon Islands and Tomales Point)
- Year-round: Data processing, permit applications, catalog updates, population modeling, and educational outreach presentations at local schools

Anticipated Results:

- Updated identification records for new and returning sharks
- Integration of 2026 data into the 30+ year dataset

- Improved population estimates and demographic trend analyses
- Increased community awareness through school presentations
- Deploy PAT (Pop-up Archival Transmitting tags) tags on the target demographic

2.4 Methods to Achieve Objective

Our education program consists of an interactive classroom presentation that introduces students to what white sharks are, how we study them, and why this research matters. We use hands-on learning tools—including shark skin samples, jaws, and other visual materials—to create an engaging, tactile experience. Students also participate in a dorsal-fin matching activity, allowing them to practice the same identification techniques used by researchers in the field.

To support this educational outreach, we conduct a full field research season each fall. We hold state and federal permits to attract white sharks to our research vessel for data collection. Our goal for 2026 is to complete approximately **35 sampling days**, during which we collect high-resolution photographs and underwater video of individual sharks.

Sampling Approach:

- Conduct fieldwork at Bodega Head, Tomales Point, and the South Farallon Islands
- Attract sharks using a seal decoy and a small (<2 kg) piece of permitted salvaged marine mammal blubber
- Photograph and video-record dorsal fins to identify individuals using unique, stable natural markings
- Document sex, size class, and behavior for each shark encountered
- Integrate all observations into our long-term dataset of **600+ catalogued sharks**

These methods allow us to estimate abundance, survival, recruitment, and long-term population trends—data that directly inform both our scientific work and the educational content we bring into classrooms.

2.5 Benefit Relative to the Goals of the Commission

This project advances the purposes of California Fish and Game Code §13103 by conducting scientific research that supports the conservation and management of California's marine wildlife while developing educational resources for Napa County students that increase public understanding of white sharks and their role in maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems.

We recognize that the species we study are not found in Napa County. However, the ecological importance of white sharks extends far beyond the waters they inhabit. Through this project, we aim to provide Napa County students with opportunities to engage in authentic California-based marine science, fostering scientific literacy, environmental stewardship, and an appreciation for one of the state's keystone marine predators.

2.6 Compliance with California Fish & Game Code §13103

This project aligns with the following allowable expenditures under §13103:

- (a) Scientific research relating to fish and wildlife conservation
- (d) Public education programs
- (e) Acquisition, development, or maintenance of wildlife habitat (indirectly through population monitoring data)

It also aligns with Wildlife Conservation Commission priorities related to:

- Marine species conservation
- Long-term ecological monitoring
- Community education and outreach

2.7 Evaluation Plan

Success will be measured by:

- Number of sampling days completed
- Number of sharks photographed and identified
- Number of new individuals added to the catalog
- Quality and completeness of data integrated into the long-term dataset
- Number of educational presentations delivered and students reached

Annual reports will summarize field effort, data collected, and progress toward population modeling goals.

List of Other Funding Sources

Each fall we solicit from new and existing donors for private donations. Historically, we have received grants from Marin and Sonoma Fish and Wildlife Commissions. We applied for 2026 but are awaiting their announcement period.

Letters of Support (Environmental Education Proposals Only)

We have included two (2) letters of recommendation in our grant application.



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Interior Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12
555 Battery Street, Suite 122
San Francisco, CA 94111

IN REPLY REFER TO:

2026-5-22

Re: Letter of support for Grant Application (Paul Kanive and Scot Anderson)

Dear Napa County Wildlife Conservation Commission:

I am writing to provide strong support for Paul Kanive and Scot Anderson's northern Californian white shark research program. Their work has provided important insights into white shark ecology, reproduction and population status informing managers and the public about best management approaches. They are well qualified as established and professional white shark experts who have authored over 35 scientific publications on white sharks and other marine wildlife. For many years I managed the research permit program at Point Reyes National Seashore. Paul and Scot are exceptional collaborators and science communicators making their research accessible and usable for Federal and other managers.

Their discoveries over the past 20+ years are the foundation of our understanding of California's white sharks and I expect their future research to continue providing important, actionable information. Ongoing research and monitoring of California top predators is needed to sustainably manage our coastal and recreational resources.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ben Becker, Ph.D.
Science Advisor
Californian Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit
Ben_becker@nps.gov
415-250-4596



June 8, 2026

Re: Recommendation to Napa Wildlife Conservation Commission Grant Program Letter of Recommendation for California White Shark Program (CWSP)

Dear Sonoma County Fish and Wildlife Commission,

My name is Nichole Roberts, and I am a TK teacher in Napa Valley Unified School District. I have had the pleasure of knowing Maxine Meckfessel for the past five years.

On October 4, 2024, Maxine visited my fourth grade classroom in Sonoma through the California White Shark Program to speak to my fourth-grade class about their work. She shared many topics with my students, including how sharks are tracked in California, what they eat, their size, and how important it is to maintain sharks within a healthy ocean environment. This was truly an extraordinary learning experience for my fourth graders.

Maxine shared her passion and experience with the California White Shark Project in a meaningful and engaging way. She was well prepared with an interactive PowerPoint presentation that included video clips, pictures, and a life-size cutout of a great white shark. She also brought in shark jaws for students to observe. My students were engaged throughout the entire presentation.

This presentation and learning experience should be shared throughout all local schools and I am hoping the program receives sufficient funding to visit Napa classrooms, including the one I am now teaching in. Students in Napa County can benefit greatly from learning about topics that extend beyond the California curriculum. They can develop an understanding of the importance of sharks and the role they play in our ecosystem.

Please consider continuing to support the California White Shark Project so that Napa County classrooms can benefit from the same valuable learning experiences my students received. Continued support will provide positive educational opportunities for students and may inspire interest in future career paths.

Sincerely,
Nichole Roberts
TK Teacher
West Park Elementary School