Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing with respect to inflammatory and inaccurate language used in article "<title>" published in <source> on <date>. I hope that you will take the time to read further and understand the damaging ramifications that media pieces like this can have.

The plight of sharks around the world is well known; the threats posed to them by over fishing, habitat loss and pollution are well documented. Groundbreaking work by [Dulvy et al (2014)](http://bit.ly/1TuM4e2) found that amongst sharks, rays and chimaeras, 1/4 are threatened with extinction.  Less well known is how the inaccurate portrayal of sharks in the media can have serious detrimental consequences for the public perception of sharks, and consequently, the support for and effectiveness of shark conservation efforts.

A scientific paper published by [Neff & Hueter (2013)](http://bit.ly/22XzUwK) demonstrates that the language used to describe and classify human/shark interactions is incredibly important and how subtle changes can have a hugely positive impacts to the accuracy of reporting, and public understanding, of human/shark incidents.

For example,  the widely applied term “shark attack” conjures sensationalised, horrific scenes of being consumed alive by an evil predator rather than thoughts of minor contact or bites, as is more often the case, when the statistics are reviewed.

**I support correctly distinguishing the nature of human/shark interactions.**

As a reader of your publications, I want to see less inflammatory and hyperbolic descriptive language used and the correct application of these terms, when you report on human/shark interactions:

* **Shark Sighting**

*Sightings of sharks in the water in proximity to people. No physical human–shark contact takes place.*

* **Shark Encounter**

*Human-shark interactions in which physical contact occurs between a shark and a person, or an inanimate object holding that person, and no injury takes place. For example, shark bites on surfboards, kayaks, and boats would be classified under this label. In some cases, this might include close calls; a shark physically “bumping” a swimmer without biting would be labelled a shark encounter, not a shark attack. A minor abrasion on the person’s skin might occur as a result of contact with the rough skin of the shark.*

* **Shark Bite**

*Incidents where sharks bite people resulting in minor to moderate injuries. Small or large sharks might be involved, but typically, a single, nonfatal bite occurs. If more than one bite occurs, injuries might be serious. Under this category, the term “shark attack” should never be used unless the motivation and intent of the animal—such as predation or defence—are clearly established by qualified experts. Since that is rarely the case, these incidents should be treated as cases of shark “bites” rather than shark “attacks.”*

* **Fatal Shark Bite**

*Human–shark conflicts in which serious injuries take place as a result of one or more bites on a person, causing a significant loss of blood and/or body tissue and a fatal outcome. Again, we strongly caution against using the term “shark attack” unless the motivation and intent of the shark are clearly established by experts, which is rarely the case. Until new scientific information appears that better explains the physical, chemical, and biological triggers leading sharks to bite humans, we recommend that the term “shark attack” be avoided by scientists, government officials, the media, and the public in almost all incidences of human–shark interaction.*

I further support the use of factual, non-inflammatory or sensational descriptions of the species involved in shark sightings, encounters and bites. Such descriptions only serve to perpetuate the negative public image of sharks.

As a provider of public media, you have an important and powerful role in society and a responsibility to safeguard the wellbeing of your audience. By choosing to report responsibly on human-shark encounters, you will be doing your oceans, and therefore your audience a great service. You can help illustrate the diversity of outcomes, decriminalize sharks in the mind of the public, and create a more objective understanding of the relationship between humans and sharks in shared ocean spaces.

Sincerely,