

Sea Turtle Update from the Federal Side NOAA and USFWS

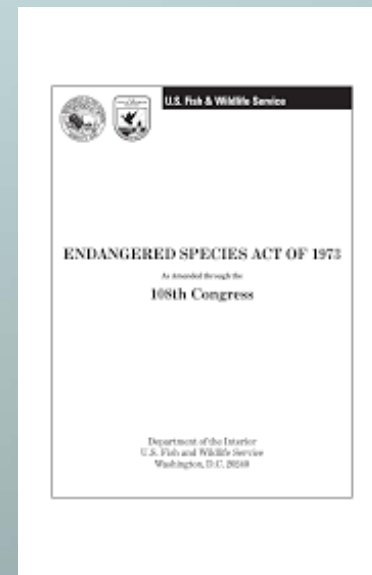
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Florida Permit Holder Meeting
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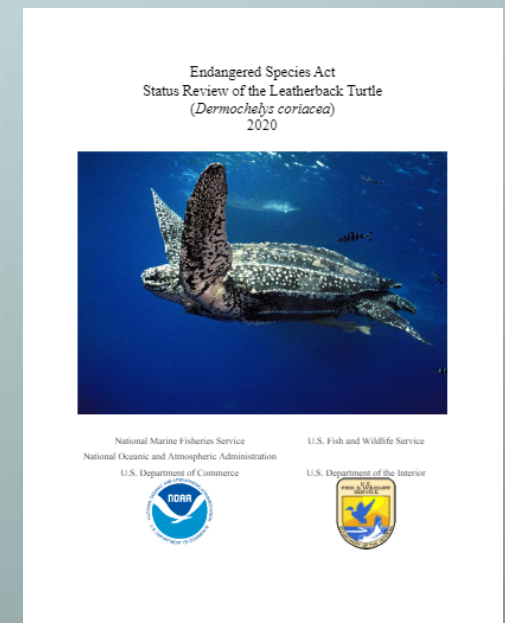
Updates

- **ESA STATUS REVIEWS and ESA FIVE-YEAR REVIEWS**
 - Leatherback Global Status Review and 12-Month Finding
 - NW Atlantic Loggerhead and Hawksbill Five Year Reviews
- **ESA CRITICAL HABITAT**
 - Green Turtle Critical Habitat
- **ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT UPDATES**



Leatherback Global Status Review

- NOAA and FWS convened a Leatherback Status Review Team in 2018 to gather and review the best available scientific data on the species, consider whether Distinct Population Segments (DPSs) apply, and evaluate the extinction risk of the species.
- Status Review was published in August 2020
(google 'leatherback status review')
- The Status Review found that 7 populations would meet the discreteness and significance criteria (part of the criteria necessary for recognition as a Distinct Population Segment) and that these populations were at high risk of extinction.



Leatherback 12-Month Finding

- Status Review informed 12 month finding published on 10 August 2020
- If the 7 Distinct Population Segments (DPSs) were listed separately, all seven would meet the definition of an endangered species (*i.e.*, they are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range)
- Leatherback already listed as endangered throughout its range
- Therefore, the agencies (NMFS and USFWS) determined that the listing of individual Distinct Population Segments (DPSs) was not warranted, and therefore no changes to the existing global endangered listing was warranted

NW Atlantic Loggerhead and Hawksbill ESA Five -Year Reviews

- The ESA requires that reviews of listed species be conducted every five years to determine if any changes to a species listing status are warranted
- FWS and NOAA initiated this review for the NW Atlantic loggerhead (DPS) in 2019 and for hawksbills (global listing) in 2020.
- We expect to complete the reviews this year. Depending on the recommendations in the five year review, further action may be warranted.



Green Turtle Critical Habitat

- Critical Habitat is defined as specific geographic areas that contain features essential to the conservation of an endangered or threatened species and that may require special management and protection
- Under the ESA the effect of designating Critical Habitat requires that during the Section 7 consultation process (reviews of projects/activities that have a federal link) the impacts to Critical Habitat must be evaluated
- In 2020 FWS and NOAA were sued regarding the lack of designation of Critical Habitat for green turtles within the one-year period following listing changes.
- A settlement agreement was reached in the case and NMFS will submit a proposed determination by June 30, 2023.
- If the Services determine that Critical Habitat should be designated, a Proposed Rule will be published and there will be opportunity for public comment



Endangered Species Act Updates

- Significant regulatory changes primarily related to listing species under the ESA, ESA critical habitat, and Section 7 rulemaking were promulgated during the last administration. These changes significantly weakened protections to listed species
- The Biden administration has issued an Executive Order mandating a review of these regulations. NMFS and USFWS will begin the process of reviewing these regulations and determining next steps in the coming months



New Sea Turtle Contact for USFWS

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THANK YOU!

Thank you **Florida Permit Holders!** Your efforts and contributions of data and information directly assist the Services in conserving and recovering sea turtles!

