



Information Summary for Consultations on the Proposed Listing of Loggerhead Sea Turtle as “Endangered” Under the *Species at Risk Act*

As part of the consultation process, the Government of Canada would like to hear your comments on the potential impacts of listing the Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*) as “endangered” under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has prepared this summary to provide information on the state of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle in Canada.

What is the *Species at Risk Act*?

As part of its strategy for the protection of species at risk, the Government of Canada proclaimed the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) in 2003. One of the purposes of SARA is to provide for the legal protection of wildlife species and the conservation of biological diversity. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has the mandate to conduct assessments on the status of wildlife species and categorize them according to their level of risk for extinction (extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, or special concern). The Government of Canada considers the scientific evidence, the comments received from Canadians during consultations, and the potential socio-economic impacts before making a decision whether or not to include the species on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under SARA. Recovery planning is undertaken for all listed species, and prohibitions are put in place protecting species assessed as extirpated, endangered, or threatened from being harmed.



Figure 1: Loggerhead Sea Turtle

About the Loggerhead Sea Turtle

The Loggerhead Sea Turtle is a large (about one metre long and 130 Kg) sea turtle with a hard, reddish-brown shell and chestnut-brown flippers that fade to yellow at the edges. Its

head and beak are large in comparison with other sea turtles. Loggerhead Sea Turtles in Atlantic Canada occur in offshore waters from Georges Bank to the Flemish Cap. Most of their life is spent at sea; however, mature females return to land to nest. No nesting occurs within Canada. Although available data are limited, most Loggerhead Sea Turtles in Atlantic Canadian waters are thought to be animals who likely originated from nesting beaches in the southern USA and Caribbean. In the Pacific, sightings in US waters off Washington and Alaska indicate that Loggerhead Turtles may also occasionally occur off British Columbia, but there have been no confirmed sightings.

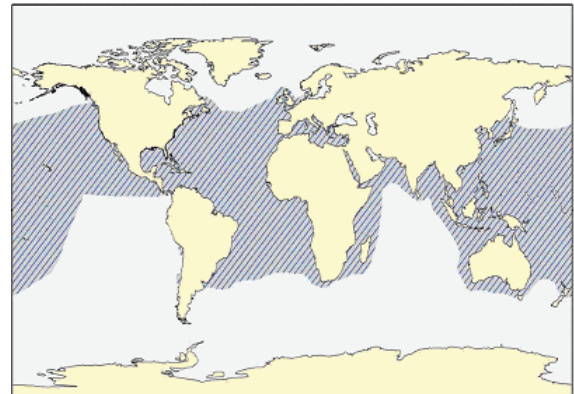


Figure 2: Global range of Loggerhead Sea Turtles

Proposed SARA Status: “Endangered”

The Loggerhead Sea Turtle has been assessed by COSEWIC as an “endangered” species. This risk level indicates that the species is likely to become extinct or extirpated in parts of its range unless something is done to address the threats it is facing. It was designated as “endangered” because it is declining globally and the documented declines in the Northwest Atlantic population are considered to be ongoing.

Threats to the Species

The biggest threat to Loggerhead Sea Turtles in Canadian waters is interactions with fishing gear. Other threats include ingestion of and entanglement in marine debris, and vessel strikes. This species faces these, and other, threats outside of Canadian waters, including man-made development on their nesting beaches and other ecosystem alterations, pollution, predation by exotic species, and climate change. In other



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waters they also face poaching and legal harvest of their eggs, meat, skin, and shells.

Special Significance of the Species

The Loggerhead Sea Turtle is one of only two species of sea turtle to frequent Canadian waters regularly. It is a highly-migratory species and therefore a shared responsibility among many nations. For some North American Aboriginal peoples, the turtle is a part of their creation stories, although Loggerhead Sea Turtles have no known current or historical significance to Aboriginal peoples in Atlantic Canada. It is not known to be a food, social, or ceremonial species and is not subject to a commercial fishery, although it is caught as by-catch in fishing activities. DFO is not aware of any community or Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge on this species that has been collected at this time.

Protection and Recovery of Species under the SARA

If the Loggerhead Sea Turtle is added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk as an “endangered” species, it will be legally protected under SARA and subject to prohibitions. It will be illegal to kill, harm, harass, capture, or take a Loggerhead Sea Turtle (except under special conditions, when permitted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada), or possess, buy, sell, or trade any part of one. It will also be illegal to destroy any habitat deemed critical to the species survival and recovery.

Possible Management Measures

If the Loggerhead Sea Turtle is listed under SARA, DFO will use the best available information to develop a Recovery Strategy and Action Plan for the species, in collaboration and consultation with stakeholders and partners. On-going actions to promote the recovery of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle are outlined in the 2010 Loggerhead Sea Turtle Conservation Action Plan, which would likely form the basis of a SARA Recovery Strategy. Actions outlined in this plan include: gear modifications, a review of at-sea observer requirements in order to improve data collection and identify appropriate levels of observer coverage in fisheries that interact with Loggerhead Sea Turtles, and the formalization of protocols and Codes of Conduct for handling, de-hooking, and releasing turtles entangled in fishing gear. The feasibility of areas of avoidance will also be considered. Any habitat identified as critical to the recovery or survival of the species will be protected from activities that could lead to its destruction. If the species is not listed under SARA, DFO would continue to implement the Conservation Action Plan under the jurisdiction of the *Fisheries Act*.

Potential Socio-Economic Impacts of Listing Under SARA

A summary of the socio-economic analysis conducted by DFO on the listing of Loggerhead Sea Turtle under SARA is available on request.

The Consultation Process – Your Comments

As part of the consultation process, the Government of Canada would like to hear your opinions on listing Loggerhead Sea Turtle as “endangered” under SARA, and any comments on the potential positive and negative impacts this listing would have on you, your industry, and/or the ecosystem. Your answers to the following questions will be used to help inform the decision whether or not to list the species under SARA:

1. How would your activities be affected if Loggerhead Sea Turtle was listed as “endangered” under SARA (including environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts)?
2. Do you support listing Loggerhead Sea Turtle as “endangered” on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under SARA? Why or why not?
3. Do you represent an industry, community, Aboriginal, or other group? If so, which group or sector do you represent?

To submit answers to the above questions, share your comments, or receive further information about the species, please contact:

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Aquatic Species at Risk Web Site
www.aquaticspeciesatrisk.gc.ca

Environment Canada
1-800-668-6767
enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca

SARA Public Registry
www.sararegistry.gc.ca

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Map Credit: U.S. National Oceanic and
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