

Response Statement - Loggerhead Sea Turtle

December 2, 2010

Common Name: Loggerhead Sea Turtle

Scientific Name: *Caretta caretta*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Endangered

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will undertake consultations with the governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Loggerhead Sea Turtle should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act* as Endangered. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle to the Governor in Council upon completion of consultations.

Once a species has been assessed by COSEWIC, further steps must be undertaken before it is added to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. For more information on this process, please view [The Species Listing Process Under SARA](#).

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: This species is declining globally and there are well documented, ongoing declines in the Northwest Atlantic population from which juveniles routinely enter and forage in Atlantic Canadian waters. The Canadian population is threatened directly by commercial fishing, particularly bycatch in the pelagic longline fleet, and by loss and degradation of nesting beaches in the southeastern USA and the Caribbean. Other threats include bycatch from bottom and midwater trawls, dredging, gillnets, marine debris, chemical pollution and illegal harvest of eggs and nesting females.

Occurrence: Atlantic Ocean

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:

Newfoundland and Labrador

Nova Scotia

Applicable federal legislation: Fisheries are managed and fish habitat is protected under the *Fisheries Act*.

Conservation activities underway: Although the Loggerhead Sea Turtle is subject to multiple threats globally, in Canadian waters the primary source of mortality is by-catch in the pelagic longline fishery. A voluntary Code of Conduct for Responsible Sea Turtle Handling and Mitigative Measures has been developed by the Canadian swordfish and tuna pelagic longline fleet. This Code of Conduct includes measures such as avoiding areas of high sea turtle capture rates, gear hauling protocols to minimise harm to turtles, sea turtle handling guidelines, and usage instructions for de-hooking gear. Vessels in this fleet carry de-hooking and line-cutting gear and license holders are being trained and certified in its use. A regional by-catch workplan is currently being undertaken by DFO and the results will be used to better quantify the sea turtle by-catch in the pelagic longline fleet. As part of this study, at-sea observer coverage has been increased in this fleet, and observers are being trained in best practices for acquiring scientific data from sea turtles. In addition, DFO is analysing observer data and the published literature to identify the best methods for decreasing sea turtle entanglement and thus enhancing post-capture survival.