



**Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of
Sea Turtles
7th Conference of the Parties
June 24-26, 2015 – Mexico City**

CIT-COP7-2015-R2

Resolution for the Conservation of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

WHEREAS leatherback sea turtles have existed on Earth for millions of years;

WHEREAS leatherback sea turtles are an important component of marine ecosystems of the Pacific Ocean;

WHEREAS leatherback sea turtles are valued for cultural, socioeconomic, ecological and scientific reasons;

CONSIDERING that the Eastern Pacific leatherback population is listed as *Critically Endangered* by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and that this species is listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), and Appendices I and II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and furthermore, is considered among the conservation priorities of various intergovernmental organizations such as the FAO;

RECOGNIZING that the nesting data obtained along the coast of the Eastern Pacific has shown a decrease in the population of more than 90% since the mid 1980s, and the population's status in the Eastern Pacific is dire and may be near the point of irreversibility;

CONSIDERING that the principal threats to leatherback turtles have been identified as incidental capture in fishing activities, unsustainable exploitation of eggs and turtles, as well as the destruction or alteration of nesting habitat;

RECOGNIZING that the countries where nesting occurs make extensive efforts to prevent egg exploitation and that the regional fisheries management organizations in the IAC Convention area have adopted measures to better understand the impact of their fisheries on sea turtles but that the decline of the Eastern Pacific population has continued;

CONSIDERING that the adoption and implementation of additional bycatch mitigation measures such as gear modifications and closed areas are necessary to protect leatherback sea turtles;

CONSIDERING the Memorandum of Understanding between the IAC and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to collaborate on sea turtle conservation, and the approval of the IATTC Resolution C-O7-03 directly relating to sea turtle conservation, which was created during the 75th Meeting of the IATTC, carried out in 2007;

CONSIDERING that the decline in leatherback sea turtle populations is undermining the ecological stability and the cultural and economic benefits to coastal communities.



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**THE 7TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE INTER-AMERICAN
CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES
RESOLVES TO:**

URGE the Parties to prioritize the following conservation actions in their work programs that can reverse the critical situation of the leatherback sea turtle in the Eastern Pacific;

- 1) That all IAC Parties whose fishing fleets operate in the Eastern Pacific submit their leatherback bycatch information in the annual report to the IAC Secretariat *Pro Tempore* in order for it to be reviewed by the IAC committees so they can provide recommendations to the Parties.
- 2) That all IAC Parties whose fishing fleets operate in the Eastern Pacific improve the leatherback turtle monitoring results through the use of on board observers, interviews, and reporting fisheries bycatch and stranding data in their annual report.
- 3) That all IAC Parties whose fishing fleets operate in the Eastern Pacific report annually the measures that they have taken to reduce leatherback bycatch in the fisheries.
- 4) That all IAC Parties enhance actions for leatherback nest identification and protection in the Eastern Pacific to increase hatchling survival and take measures to protect leatherback habitat, as well as urge non-parties to cooperate with the IAC to report about conservation measures taken on their leatherback nesting beaches.
- 5) That all IAC Parties with fishing fleets operating in the Eastern Pacific establish and evaluate national programs fostering safe handling and release of sea turtles incidentally caught in all fisheries, training fishermen with the best handling practices.
- 6) That all IAC Parties agree to the five year strategic actions containing the key activities identified in Annex 1, and to submit an annual progress report to the IAC's Secretariat *Pro Tempore*.

REQUEST the IAC's Scientific and Consultative Committee of Experts, in cooperation with the Secretariat *Pro Tempore* and the other IAC Parties:

- 7) To evaluate the implementation of the five-year strategic actions, through annual meetings of the working group appointed by the Scientific and Consultative Committees of Experts where they will provide a consolidated summary report to the COP, Focal Points and Secretariat *Pro Tempore*.
- 8) That the IAC Secretariat *Pro Tempore* coordinates the implementation of the strategic actions with the involved countries, and requests the cooperation of IAC's non-parties, RFMOs and existing multilateral agreements.



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9) That the Parties, Scientific and Consultative Committee of Experts, through the Secretariat *Pro Tempore*, work to identify technical and financial support for the strategic actions, using all available instruments.

10) The IAC Secretariat *Pro Tempore* will provide copies of this resolution to other relevant Conventions and those organizations with which the IAC has a Memorandum of Understanding.

This resolution repeals and replaces the IAC Resolution on Conservation of Leatherback Turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) COP2/2004/R-1 in its entirety.

ANNEX 1

Strategic Actions for Five-Years for the Conservation of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback Turtle

The Regional Action Plan for Reversing the Decline of the Eastern Pacific Leatherback (<http://savepacificleatherbacks.org>) was used as a basis for many of the activities in the five-year strategic actions below. These activities divided in five strategies all focus on mortality reduction in marine habitats and protection of nesting sites and nesting females to increase reproductive productivity.

1) Reduce bycatch of adult and sub adult leatherback turtles in fisheries

Time: 5 years (recommended as on-going activity)

IAC Parties: IAC Parties whose territorial waters host Eastern Pacific leatherback turtles or whose fishing fleets interact with Eastern Pacific leatherback turtles.

Activities:

- a) Conduct research on possible bycatch reduction mitigation measures, including testing mitigation actions in passive nets (e.g. light sticks/net illumination, reducing net soak time, lowering the net buoy line and using best practices for setting and retrieving nets), and implement appropriate mitigation methods that will be used by type of fleet and gear with emphasis in the zones with the most probability of interaction between fisheries and leatherback turtle.
- b) Promote the implementation of best practices for handling and release of incidentally caught sea turtles and hold workshops to disseminate this information.
- c) Continue and increase bycatch monitoring at ports, with on-board observers (when and where possible) throughout the Eastern Pacific region, and ensure that the information is collected in a standardized way so that it is comparable at the regional level.



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- d) Expand and/or create, when possible, communication programs with fishing fleets as measures for promoting best practices for handling and releasing incidentally captured turtles and reporting bycatch.
- e) Promote exchanges between fishermen to share experiences on how to reduce bycatch with mitigation measures.
- f) Request to non-parties, using appropriate means, including RFMOs and multilateral agreements, to adhere to the development of the activities outlined in the preceding paragraphs.

2) Identify areas of high interaction with fisheries of more importance for the leatherback survival

Time: 1-2 years

IAC Parties: IAC Parties whose national waters host Eastern Pacific leatherback turtles or whose fishing fleets interact with Eastern Pacific leatherback turtles.

Activities:

- a) Compilation of fishing fleets by country that interact with the Eastern Pacific leatherback turtle that includes characterization of fisheries and their relationship with bycatch, and a regional compilation on fishing operations in areas adjacent to nesting beaches. This information should be shared with the IAC Secretariat *Pro Tempore*.
- b) Identify critical areas in the distribution range for the leatherback turtles that are in need of spatial and temporal management to reduce leatherback bycatch or directed take.

3) Define and protect important areas for the leatherback turtle survival in different life stages

Time: 1-5 years.

IAC Parties: Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Panama, Guatemala, and United States

Activities:

- a) Identify aggregation sites for adults and juveniles, as well as migration routes of importance or priority for the conservation of the species, as well as potential sites to be subjected to appropriate measures for spatial and temporal management.
- b) Identify locations in international waters ("hotspots") that are important for the conservation of the species.

4) Eliminate any consumption and illegal use of the leatherback turtle, including parts and derivatives, as well as all kinds of capture, transportation and trade.



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Time: 2-5 years.

IAC Parties: all IAC parties on the Eastern Pacific coast.

Activities:

- a) Identify areas where poaching occurs and quantify the frequency of occurrence.
- b) Carry out awareness and enforcement campaigns to stop consumption and illegal use of sea turtles.

5) Nesting sites protection

Time: 1-5 years

IAC Parties: Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala and Ecuador

Activities:

- a) Ensure monitoring of the index nesting beaches and encourage monitoring on all leatherback nesting beaches.
- b) Search for and identify new nesting beaches for the species within IAC Parties.
- c) Maximize efforts to ensure that all nests are identified and protected.
- d) Identify and implement economic alternatives in local communities in areas adjacent to nesting beaches.