



Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles
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Resolution for the Conservation of the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle
(Dermochelys coriacea)

This document was prepared at the 12th Consultative Committee of Experts meeting per recommendation of the 15th Scientific Committee, and includes the priority conservation actions from the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) Status Assessment report (2018; pag. 31-33). The Scientific Committee and Consultative Committee of Experts ask the IAC 9th Conference of the Parties to consider this draft Resolution for adoption.

Reference document: Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Working Group. 2018. [Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle \(*Dermochelys coriacea*\) Status Assessment](#) (Bryan Wallace and Karen Eckert, Compilers and Editors). Conservation Science Partners and the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST). WIDECAST Technical Report No. 16. Godfrey, Illinois. 36 pp.

NOTE TO COP9 Delegates: The text and deletions in the Resolution are edits and comments suggested by The United States (blue) and Peru (green).

**Resolution for the Conservation of the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle
(*Dermochelys coriacea*)**

CONSIDERING that the study *Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Turtle (Dermochelys coriacea) Status Assessment*, reported declining annual nest/female counts in the Regional Management Unit from 1990 to present;

CONSIDERING ~~the recommendations from the aforementioned study to address the decline that the above mentioned study contains conservation recommendations as to how the declining trends taking place since 1990 to the present can be addressed;~~

RECOGNIZING ~~that the foraging grounds and nesting beaches for Northwest Atlantic leatherbacks overlap with part of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) area of application that foraging grounds used by these nesting leatherbacks include the North Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, and implementing conservation measures, either on nesting beaches and/or on foraging grounds, therefore involves multiple IAC Parties;~~

NOTING that conservation actions are already being implemented by IAC Parties;

CONSIDERING that important habitats for the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback are located in countries that are ~~currently not IAC Parties, such as the major nesting grounds in French Guyana, Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad and foraging grounds in Canada; but that are eligible to be Parties, such as French Guyana, Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad and Canada;~~

RECOGNIZING that to recover the Northwest Atlantic leatherback population, collaboration on critical conservation actions is necessary by all of the countries in its range;

RECOGNIZING some of the recommendations are already being implemented by IAC Parties; and that it is important to convey these recommendations to non-member states that play key roles in the ecology of NWA Leatherbacks (Canada, Trinidad & Tobago, France [French Guyana], Guyana and Surinam);

RECOGNIZING that to implement effective conservation of the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback population international collaboration between all the countries of its range of distribution is essential;

THE NINTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES RESOLVES THAT:

1. The Parties and the Secretariat *Pro Tempore* will reach out to Canada, Guyana, French Guyana (and France on its behalf), Trinidad & Tobago, and Suriname to inform them of the critical situation of the population.

2. The Parties and the Secretariat *Pro Tempore* will encourage them to accede the treaty, as well as partner with the IAC on priority conservation activities, in particular related to reducing fisheries bycatch, protecting key nesting beaches, and improving in-water and nesting beach monitoring programs.

3. The IAC Parties, as resources allow, should endeavor to strengthen their fishery observer programs to improve monitoring Northwest Atlantic leatherback interactions and use the minimum standards for scientific observer coverage that have been established by relevant Regional Fishery Management Organizations.

4. The IAC Parties commit to implement measures for require the safe handling and release of Northwest Atlantic leatherbacks in their fisheries.

5. To the extent possible, the IAC Parties will endeavor to increase enforcement of laws and regulations related to Northwest Atlantic leatherback conservation, particularly related to fisheries bycatch and marine protected areas.

6. The IAC Secretariat *Pro Tempore*, in consultation with the Parties, shall endeavor to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas to improve cooperation between the two agreements.

7. The IAC Scientific Committee will develop a data sheet for the IAC Parties that have fleets that interact with the Northwest Atlantic leatherbacks to report their interactions. To the extent possible, this data sheet should be harmonized with existing data reporting requirements in ICCAT. This data sheet shall be incorporated into the IAC Annual Report in time for the 2020 report.

8. The IAC Scientific Committee will evaluate whether new protected areas in the Convention area could improve Northwest Atlantic leatherback conservation.

~~URGE the IAC Parties and the Secretariat *Pro Tempore* to reach out to those non IAC countries that are in the range of the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback such as Canada, Guyana, French Guyana, Trinidad and Surinam to inform them on the situation of the population, and to encourage them to ratify the IAC, and/or form partnerships with IAC member States to develop the activities that have been identified as priorities for the conservation of NWA Leatherbacks and are listed in Annex I.~~

REQUIRE the IAC Parties:

Comentado [VC1]: Text in blue 1-8 suggested by the United States to re-write original text 1-9 below

- 1) ~~In the case they have fishing fleets in the Northwest Atlantic, to report in their Annual Report information on interactions of leatherbacks with artisanal and industrial fisheries collected using onboard observers, interviews, fisheries reports and stranding data, including the number of interactions, cause of death, distribution, and seasonality.~~
- 2) ~~In the case that bycatch occurs in the above mentioned area it is necessary to strengthen the data collection on the fishing gear that is interacting.~~
- 3) ~~Promote programs for best practices for safe handling and release of turtles incidentally caught in those fisheries that interact with NWA Leatherbacks.~~
- 4) ~~To work through the Secretary *Pro Tempore* towards establishing formal cooperation with the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to encourage its members operating in the NWA Leatherback range to report in their log books leatherback bycatch.~~
- 5) ~~To increase their efforts on enforcement of regulations and protection of marine protected areas.~~
- 6) ~~To analyze the potential of implementing and establishing new protected areas, and urge non member States to do likewise, especially in areas with key nesting beaches (e.g., the Guyanas, Trinidad).~~
- 7) ~~To continue working to monitor, remove or prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), encouraging non member States to do likewise (e.g., for French Guyana see IFREMER 2012).~~
- 8) ~~To increase and strengthen their protection action in NWA Leatherback nesting beaches to protect the eggs from poaching and other threats, encouraging non member States to collaborate on providing information on conservation measures in leatherback nesting beaches to the IAC.~~
- 9) ~~To increase and strengthen their monitoring actions and any tagging programs to increase identification of nesting females.~~

Comentado [VC2]: Peru suggest text in green

URGE the IAC Parties to implement as appropriate and to the extent possible, the priority conservation actions as listed in ANNEX I of this Resolution.

ANNEX I SUGGESTION TO DELETE

Recommendations on priority actions for conservation, for the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback

1. Anthropogenic threats

- Characterize the distribution and density of fixed gear and turtles in shelf waters using aerial surveys, mapping of primary coastal fishing grounds or the most feasible methods.
- Investigate and monitor the potential impact and effects of ocean plastic and other toxic debris, as well as aberrant coastal infestations of (typically pelagic) *Sargassum* weed.
- Explore opportunities to leverage efforts to reduce interactions between right whales and vertical lines that could also benefit leatherbacks in northern foraging areas.
- Define and implement mechanisms to ensure continued work to monitor leatherback foraging populations and fisheries interactions in the Gulf of Mexico, New England, and Nova Scotia
- Investigate and document the potential magnitude and types of effects from fossil fuel exploration and extraction, as well as from oil spills in marine and coastal ecosystems.

2. Habitat Loss

- Implement the voluntary form to report environmental parameters in nesting beaches. (This could characterize the behavioral response of nesting leatherbacks to beach erosion, and document if there is nest translocation in different beaches.
- Encourage and implement females and nests monitoring programs in nesting beaches (Involve resource managers to include conservation of turtle nesting habitat viability when deciding on projects to mine sand, fortify coastlines [e.g., beach armoring], and other coastal development activities).
- Define and implement buffer zones for nesting beaches and establish guidelines for best practices on infrastructure and other activities. (This could help prioritize retaining/enhancing resilience in coastal ecosystems, particularly as it relates to residential and tourism infrastructure development in an era of climate change and sea level rise).
- Verify that other parameters important for incubation in beaches (e.g. temperature, humidity, organic matter) are present on the nesting beaches within normal ranges of variability.

Comentado [VC3]: The United States suggests deleting the annex I as it is not a prioritized list with clear indication of who will do these actions. It is not clear that the Secretariat *Pro Tempore* has the capability to work with the Parties on all these actions. The United States is supportive of these activities, but feels the work of the IAC should be focused on key priorities as encouraging non-Parties to accede to the Convention and cooperate with the IAC during prior to accession, as well as building relationship with key organizations, such as ICCAT.

3. Life history and demographic parameters

- ~~Prioritize collaborative data collection and analysis of existing data~~
- ~~Select and implement suitable standardized models and execute capture-recapture data analyses to determine regional patterns in remigration intervals, clutch frequency, and survivorship of tagged reproductive females~~

~~(Tagging data exist but data from high volume nesting sites are generally maintained by site-level organizations that rarely share this information—while data from smaller nesting sites (<100 gravid females/yr.) tend to be archived with WIDECAST's Regional Marine Turtle Tagging Centre (University of the West Indies Cave Hill, Barbados), so there is a need to promote broader sharing of tag return data and enhanced tagging across nesting sites (cf. Meylan 1999; Horrocks et al. 2011). It is recommended that current efforts and information are unified in a regulated regional database easy to access.)~~

- ~~Implement the standardized methods at the legal level and execute analyses to determine patterns and biological indicators of incubation and hatchling success across the region~~

~~(Hatching success data exist for many sites, can be analyzed across months within nesting seasons and across years, in relation to handling and treatment of nests, temperature, and other effects.~~

~~Implement a standardized collection of *in situ* temperatures (beaches and nests). Execute relevant analyses of existing satellite tracking data of reproductive females to identify migratory paths, and spatial and/or temporal shifts in post-nesting or foraging destination behavior.)~~