



INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES

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GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING SEA TURTLE ACTION PLANS FOR IAC PARTY COUNTRIES

Guidelines for Preparing Sea Turtle Action Plans for IAC Party Countries

Introduction

This document was prepared taking into consideration that the Convention establishes that each Party must take appropriate and necessary measures, based on the best available scientific evidence, for the protection, conservation and recovery of sea turtle populations and their habitats. Furthermore, each Party must establish a program to ensure monitoring of the application of these measures. Representatives from the government, non-governmental organizations and private sector are highly encouraged to participate in the development of this action plan.

The IAC Consultative Committee of Experts, during their Fifth Meeting, have suggested providing the Parties with an outline of the basic guidelines of the elements that should be included in a program or national plan on sea turtle protection and conservation measures.

The document was prepared by reviewing some of the region's existing national action/recovery plans and species specific action plans, the majority of which incorporate a five (5) year time period in which it must achieve its goals. As it was mentioned earlier, the objective of these guidelines is to serve as a foundation for all countries that are currently in the process of preparing or updating their action plan as requested by the IAC and for those countries that already have an action plan in place, these guidelines can be taken into consideration when it is time for them to be updated allowing countries to follow a standard outline.

Basic guidelines of the elements that should be included in the preparation of a Sea Turtle Action Plan for IAC Party Countries

- Preface (should mention what actions are being carried out in the Party country to comply with the mandates of the IAC)
- Acknowledgements
- Table of Contents
- Lists of Figures and Tables
- List of Symbols or Acronyms
- List of Abbreviations
- Summary (Spanish, English)

1. GENERAL CHARACTERIZATION OF SEA TURTLES

1.1. General characteristics

1.2 Sea Turtle Species Present

1.2.1. *Caretta caretta*

1.2.2. *Chelonia mydas*

1.2.3. *Eretmochelys imbricata*

1.2.4. *Dermochelys coriacea*

1.2.5. *Lepidochelys olivacea*

1.2.6. *Lepidochelys kempii*

1.3. Distribution

1.4. Life cycle

1.5. Population dynamics

1.6. Conservation status in the country

2. STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION OF SEA TURTLES

Detailed information that should be included for each species (globally or locally):

- FAO Names
- Names in the Party country
- Species description
- Historical and current distribution
- Population trends
- Reproductive ecology
- Nesting populations
- In-water populations
- Habitat and diet
- Genetics
- Conservation status/Level of species vulnerability

3. MAIN THREATS TO SEA TURTLES

A detailed list of threats is provided below.

Degradation of nesting beaches, for example:

- Sand mining
- Lighting
- Beach stabilization structures
- Beach cleaning equipment and vehicular use on beaches
- Beach rebuilding (nourishment) projects
- Beachfront construction and coastal squeeze

Degradation of marine habitat, for example:

- Use of chemical substances for fishing on coral reefs
- Industrial waste
- Dumping waste at sea
- Exploration, production, refining and transportation of oil, gas and minerals
- Agriculture and grey water discharge
- Anchoring of boats and dredging

Contamination, for example:

- Oil contamination
- Chemical pollution
- Beach debris
- Desalinization plant pollution
- Harmful algal blooms

Fisheries activities, for example:

- Trawl Fisheries
- Dredge Fisheries
- Longline Fisheries
- Other Hook and Line Fisheries
- Gillnet (Drift) Fisheries
- Gillnet (Demersal and Drift) Fisheries
- Pound Nets and Weirs
- Pots/Traps
- Purse Seines
- Fishing with chemicals at reefs
- Dynamiting reefs and reef extraction

Other possible impacts, for example:

- Bad Practices in Legal Harvest
- Illegal Harvest
- Bad Practices in Research and Conservation Management Activities
- Power Generation Activities
- Vessel Strikes
- Human Presence
- Military Activities
- Salvage Operations
- Dredging
- Channel and Bridge Blasting
- Marina and Dock Development
- Offshore Breakwaters
- Nautical tourism (wakeboards, jet skis, among others)

Interactions with other species, for example:

- Predators
- Parasites
- Non-native seaweed, trees and vegetation
- Invasive species of animals
- Domestic animals

Disease

Other natural and anthropogenic factors

- Climate change and ocean acidification
- Natural catastrophes
- Marine debris entanglement
- Marine debris ingestion
- Noise pollution
- Thermal pollution

Inadequate regulatory mechanisms

4. OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL STATUS OF SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION

4.1. Major conservation efforts

4.2. Legislation

4.2.1. Current legislation

- Protective measures for sea turtles or legislation directly or indirectly protecting their habitat , e.g. protected areas or regulation of coastal development
- Legislation on legal harvest

4.2.2. International cooperation

Global treaties, for example:

- CITES
- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Marpol Convention
- Convention on Migratory Species
- Ramsar Convention

Regional agreements, for example:

- Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles
- Cartagena Convention and SPAW Protocol
- WHMSI
- Lima Convention or Permanent Commission for the South Pacific

4.3. National coordination (partnerships), public and private

4.4. Sea Turtle Conservation Strategies (It is suggested that each Party country include, in their Action Plan, the elements outlined below)

It is recommended that the goals to be completed within the National Plan be created over a 5 year period, indicating their respective actions and associated costs, since this is the timeframe adopted by the majority of the Action Plans reviewed. Annex 1 provides a list of documents that may be helpful in preparing this section.

4.4.1. Define objectives of the Plan

4.4.2. Define strategies to address threats listed above

4.4.3. Implementation of Action Plan, including responsible agencies and time frame

ANNEX 1

List of technical documents to consult when preparing the Action Plan

- National Action Plans (Belize, Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, USA).
<http://www.iacseaturtle.org/planes-eng.htm>
- WIDECAST, Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plans (STRAPs).
<http://www.widecast.org/Resources/STRAPs.html>
- Eckert, K. L., Bjorndal, K. A., Abreu-Grobois, F. A. and Donnelly, M. (Eds.)
1999. Research and Management Techniques for the Conservation of Sea Turtles.
IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group Publication No. 4. Washington, DC:
235 pp. <http://iucn-mtsg.org/publications/techniques-manual-en/>
- IAC. 2011. Manual of Management Techniques for Sea Turtle Conservation at
Nesting Beaches. www.iacseaturtle.org