



NEWS BULLETIN NO. 37



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

OCTOBER— DECEMBER, 2019

Adoption of Peru's Sea Turtle National Conservation Plan 2019-2029

SERFOR Press Release (Spanish only): http://bit.ly/SERFOR_Peru

Peru's National Forestry and Wildlife Services (SERFOR) process to develop the Sea Turtle National Conservation Plan 2019-2029 began in 2014. On December 4th, 2019 the plan was adopted by the Executive Direction Resolution 253-2019-MINAGRI-SERFOR-DE.



Photo: Javier Quiñones—IMARPE

The plan was developed with the objective of reducing by 50% the bycatch of the five species of sea turtle found in Peru, during the following decade. According to SERFOR, Peru is one of the countries with higher sea turtle bycatch in the Eastern Pacific, involving Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Green (*Chelonia mydas*), Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) turtles.

This National Plan proposes six action lines in response to its specific objectives, focusing on designing tools for conservation and capacity building; increasing awareness and developing training in bycatch priority areas; fighting extraction and consumption; conservation of habitats; environmental education and strengthening management and sustainable tourism.

SERFOR press release states that the approval of this plan ratifies Peru's commitment to sea turtle conservation and the international agreements such as the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC).

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Participation of the IAC in the 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas



Chair of ICCAT's 26th Regular Meeting (Delegate from Panama), IAC Secretary and ICCAT General Secretary

The IAC Secretary Pro Tempore, Ms. Veronica Caceres participated in the 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) held in Palma de Mallorca, Spain on November 18 – 25, 2019.

Ms. Caceres presented a statement on behalf of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IATTC) recognizing ICCAT as a strategic partner in sea turtle conservation as well as the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) initiative to collaborate with the IAC in the assessment and mitigation of sea turtle bycatch through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU proposal, by the IAC Secretary and will be assessed by ICCAT.



The statement was presented to support the draft recommendation by ICCAT on the by-catch of sea turtles caught in association with ICCAT fisheries which combines, streamlines, and amends recommendations 10-09 and 13-11, presented by the United States, Brazil, Curacao, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Senegal, Belize, and Mexico. A consensus was not achieved on the proposal. Canada, Japan, Uruguay, and the European Union provided their comments for future consideration.

Brazil's Government Actions to protect sea turtles from the oil spill



Source: Technical Report n° 15/2019-TAMAR-Vitoria- ES/DIBIO/ICMBio

The Eastern National Center for Sea Turtle and Marine Biodiversity Research and Conservation belonging to Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) of Brazil's Ministry of Environment (IBAMA) informed the IAC on Brazil's government actions to protect sea turtles from the imminent arrival of oil to the coast during the nesting season.



Foto Barbara Anderson en Unsplash

There are five species of sea turtles in Brazil: olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), green (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*). TAMAR/ICMBio Centre, IBAMA and the Armed Forces (Army and Navy) have formed a coalition to monitor and clean the marine areas impacted by the oil spill detected on the northeast coast of Brazil in August 2019.

Several of the areas affected by the spill are priority areas for the reproduction and conservation of sea turtles. The olive ridley, loggerhead and hawksbill nesting beaches are in the northeast of the country. Also, the northern coasts of Espirito Santo state are priority areas for loggerhead (*C. caretta*) and the only nesting areas for leatherbacks (*D. coriacea*) in Brazil. This population of leatherback turtles (Southwest Atlantic) has been listed as critically endangered by the IUCN.

For Brazil's sea turtle conservation program, it is essential that nests are kept in their places of origin to ensure the hatchlings develop without human interference and in natural hatching conditions. However, in high-risk areas (i.e. coastal development, erosion), the nests are relocated to other beaches or to Foundation TAMAR hatcheries. Among the actions to protect sea turtles from oil, teams in the field have increased monitoring effort to ensure that hatchlings from *in situ* nests don't get caught in oil slicks, as these can become physical barriers and intoxication spots. Hatchlings from highly impacted areas have been transferred and released in safer areas.

A large number of Brazil's index nesting beaches of *L. olivacea*, *E. imbricata* and *C. caretta* were impacted by oil although the effect of pollution does not seem to be significant at a population scale. As for the oil in *C. caretta* and *D. coriacea* index beaches in Espirito Santo, some fragments were recorded in Povoação beach and a few kilometers from Comboios beach, where oil occurrence has not been confirmed but they are still on high alert. In some beaches oil has been removed, however, it is probable that more particles will arrive, although fragments have been recorded in smaller sizes (1-5 cm de diameter).

Work teams from Foundation Pro-Tamar, Tamar/ICMBio Centre, the Armed Forces and other institutions partners of the Sea Turtle Action Plan continue monitoring the areas affected.

Workshop “Basis to monitor sea turtle stranding and mortality analysis”



Mar del Plata, Argentina, December 5, 2019

Argentina’s Project *GCP/ARG/025/GFF* “Protection of marine biodiversity: ecosystem approach and protected areas” is implemented by the Nation’s Governmental Secretary on Environment and Sustainable Development with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the implementing agency of the Global Environment Facility (FMAM/GEF) funds.

Within the framework of this project, a Letter of Agreement was signed between FAO and *Mundo Marino Foundation* (MMF) with the objective of implementing concrete actions to improve sea turtle conservation status in the main area of distribution of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*) and leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*).

On December 5th, the workshop “Basis to monitor Sea Turtle Stranding and Mortality Analysis” took place in the National Institute of Fishery Research and Development (INIDEP) in *Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires* Province. The workshop’s objectives were to review the background on the monitoring of sea turtle strandings in the coastal area from San Clemente del Tuyu to Mar Chiquita and agree on field protocols. To organize and streamline data collection in the field, these protocols will be implemented during the simultaneous stranding and vessel monitoring campaigns planned for 2020 in Project *GCP/ARG/025/GFF*. A multi and interdisciplinary team will ensure a wider diagnosis of the strandings facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the anthropogenic and natural causes of sea turtles mortality in Argentinian waters.



OUR BEST WISHES FOR A
HAPPY 2020

Happy Holidays

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