



**Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation
of Sea Turtles**
10th Conference of the Parties
June 15-17, 2022 – Panama

Resolution CIT-COP10-2022-R6

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

WHEREAS leatherback sea turtles have existed on Earth for millions of years and are an important component of marine ecosystems of the Pacific Ocean;

RECOGNIZING the critical ecological importance of the leatherback sea turtle and its cultural, socioeconomic, and scientific value;

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 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (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 bycatch in fishing activities, unsustainable exploitation of eggs and turtles, as well as the destruction or alteration of nesting habitats;

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-19-04 directly relating to sea turtle conservation, which was created during the 94th Meeting of the IATTC, carried out in 2019;

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

CONSIDERING that the recommendations by the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts working group and the Scientific Committee aim to reverse the aforementioned decline in leatherback sea turtle populations.

THE 10TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES RESOLVES:

URGE all the IAC Parties whose fishing fleets operate in the Eastern Pacific to prioritize and implement in their work programs the following conservation actions that can reverse the critical situation of the leatherback sea turtle in the Eastern Pacific:

- a. Systematically collect statistically reliable data on leatherback bycatch.
- b. Implement systematic data collection on stranded leatherback turtles to provide supplementary information on mortality sources.
- c. Strengthen existing fisheries monitoring programs gathering information on leatherback bycatch through on-board observers and/or electronic monitoring. Consider using alternative methods with interviews in port, in case that onboard observers or electronic monitoring are not available. Include this information in their corresponding IAC Annual Reports.
- d. Establish and implement monitoring programs with on-board observers and/or electronic monitoring in fisheries not currently observed that impact the leatherbacks, considering economic and practical feasibility.
- e. Strive to implement or improve measures to reduce bycatch and mortality of leatherback sea turtles in the Eastern Pacific fisheries, based on the best scientific information available.
- f. Establish and evaluate national programs on safe handling and release of sea turtles bycaught in all fisheries that could impact leatherbacks, training fishermen on best handling and release practices.
- g. Strengthen actions for the identification and protection of leatherback nests in the Eastern Pacific for the enhanced survival of hatchlings, as well as take measures to protect their habitat, and urge non-Party countries to collaborate with the IAC by strengthening actions to protect nests, females, and hatchlings, and providing information on the conservation measures implemented on their nesting beaches.

That all IAC Parties implement the strategic actions in Annex I and submit the information on the implementation in the corresponding sections of the IAC Annual Report.

REQUEST that the IAC Scientific Committee and the Consultative Committee of Experts review and harmonize the information in Annex II to be included in the format of the Annual Report of the Parties to the IAC, and request the Secretariat include it in the IAC Annual Report.

The IAC Scientific Committee and Consultative Committee of Experts will analyze the information provided in the IAC Annual Report required in this resolution and will provide recommendations to the Parties.

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

- a. Determine methods to assess the impacts of conservation activities at the regional scale.
- b. Evaluate every five years the implementation of the conservation measures and strategic actions in Annex 1. The working group designated by the Scientific Committee and the Consultative Committee of Experts will prepare an evaluation report every five years to be presented to the Committees and subsequently to the COP. The first evaluation report will be presented in 2027.
- c. That the Secretary and the Parties of the Convention, using appropriate means, encourage collaboration with non-IAC Parties, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), and other relevant multilateral organizations and entities to implement measures for the conservation of the East Pacific leatherback turtle.
- d. That the Parties, and the Scientific and Consultative Committee of Experts, through the Secretariat, work to identify potential technical and financial collaboration to implement the conservation measures in this resolution, considering the strategic action in Annex I, using all available instruments.
- e. The IAC Secretariat 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*) CIT-COP7-2015-R2 in its entirety.

Annex I

Strategic Actions 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 strategic actions and activities below. These are divided into four strategies focused on mortality reduction in marine habitats and protection of nesting sites and nesting females to increase reproductive productivity.

Strategic Action 1: Reduce incidental capture (bycatch) of adult and juvenile leatherback turtles in fisheries

Activities

- a) Make efforts to, establish, implement and/or strengthen the application of bycatch reduction measures for leatherbacks in fisheries, based on the best scientific information available.
- b) Conduct research on viable bycatch reduction measures, considering innovation in fishing gear and methods, and the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, which will be used by type of fleet and gear with emphasis in the zones with the most probability of interaction between fisheries and leatherback turtles to reduce harm or injury and mortality.
- c) Establish and promote the implementation of best practices for safe handling and release of incidentally caught sea turtles, in order to reduce harm or injury and mortality. Conduct workshops to disseminate this information, and improve communication among fishermen to implement these practices.
- d) Continue bycatch monitoring at ports and with on-board observers, among others, increase and strengthen it when possible and appropriate, and ensure that the information collected for inclusion in the Annex 2 table is standardized.
- e) Establish and improve communication with fishing fleet in order to promote best practices for handling and releasing of incidentally captured turtles and bycatch reporting.
- f) Promote exchanges between fishermen of the IAC Region to share experiences on how to reduce and mitigate bycatch.

- g) Compile, to the extent possible, country specific data on bycatch on each fishing fleet that interacts with the Eastern Pacific leatherback, including characterization of fisheries. This information should be shared in the Annual Report of the Parties.
- h) Identify critical areas in the distribution range of the leatherback turtle that require spatial and temporal management to reduce leatherback bycatch.
- i) Identify and report the fate of sea turtles bycaught and retained on board.

Strategic Action 2: Define and protect important areas for survival of different life stages of the leatherback.

Activities:

- a) Identify adult and juvenile aggregation sites, migration routes, and other potential sites of importance or conservation priorities in national waters which could be subjected to appropriate measures for spatial and temporal management of threats.
- b) Identify critical locations in international waters that are important for the conservation of the species.

Strategic Action 3: Strengthen existing prohibitions on the consumption and use of the leatherback turtle, including parts and derivatives, as well as all kinds of capture, transportation, and trade.

Activities:

- a) Identify and characterize areas where poaching and illegal use occurs, quantify the frequency of occurrence, and prioritize efforts to reduce this threat.
- b) Carry out awareness and enforcement campaigns to stop consumption and illegal use of sea turtles, in the areas identified in (a) above.

Strategic Action 4: Nesting sites protection

Activities:

- a) Promote and ensure the protection of nests, females, and hatchlings and promote comprehensive and thorough biological monitoring throughout the nesting season at index nesting beaches and other known leatherback nesting beaches.

- b) Identify, and include new nesting beaches for the species in the existing programs for the protection of nests, females, and hatchlings, and biological monitoring within IAC Parties.
- c) Maximize efforts to ensure that all nests of the species are identified and protected, and develop and implement strategies to ensure an increasing hatching success and hatchling production.
- d) Implement economic alternatives in local communities in areas adjacent to nesting beaches, reducing pressure on the species and supporting the ecosystems services provided by sea turtles.

It is recommended that the Secretary and the Parties invite non-Parties, using appropriate means, including RFMOs and multilateral agreements, to participate in the development and implementation of the activities outlined in the preceding strategic actions.

Annex II

Information proposed by the EP Leatherback Task Force requested to assess the implementation of the strategic actions in this Resolution and their impact on the conservation of the EP Leatherback. For those countries reporting nesting of EP Leatherback, all the beaches monitored (index and non-index) will be included in Part V “*Nesting Information*” in the IAC Annual Report. The following information will be included in the IAC Annual Report in the format available in the online platform.

Table 1. Information regarding **monitoring and bycatch reduction** of the EP Leatherback, according to the indicators suggested in this resolution strategic actions.

EP LEATHERBACK MONITORING AND BYCATCH REDUCTION			
Country		Year	
Fisheries Information			
In your country, there are interactions of fisheries with leatherback (yes / no)			
Choose the fishing area (Coastal up to 12 miles; Oceanic, further than 12 miles)			
Choose the fishing gear interacting with leatherbacks <i>Note: information regarding industrial longline is currently included in the IAC Annual Report (Part VI – Fisheries Information).</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Artisanal longline <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial longline <input type="checkbox"/> Gillnet <input type="checkbox"/> Bottom trawl net <input type="checkbox"/> Trawl nets <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Indicate target species <i>Note: Information on industrial longline is included in the IAC Annual Report (Part VI – Fisheries Information).</i>			
Fishing efforts (e.g., fleet size; number of the fleet total trips) <i>Note: Information on industrial longline is included in the IAC Annual Report (Part VI – Fisheries Information).</i>			
Monitoring Activities			
Choose the monitoring method.		<input type="checkbox"/> Onboard observers <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Radio communication <input type="checkbox"/> Stranding reports <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Monitoring effort (with metrics) Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of trips with onboard observers Number of observers at port Number of fishermen logbooks recorded in the year Number of self-reporting sheets registered 			
Leatherback bycatch (total or estimated number of animals captured)			
Number of turtles released alive and dead		Live: Dead:	
Measures to Reduce Bycatch Impacts			
Fishermen training on best practices for safe handling and release of sea turtles (yes/no)			
Indicate the type of training			
Number of fishermen registered in the country			
Number of fishermen trained this year			
Choose the types of fishing gear modification utilized and indicate if its use is mandatory or voluntary <i>Countries wishing to provide additional information on the type of fishing gear modification by fishery, can do it attaching the information.</i>		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> TEDs <input type="checkbox"/> Large Circle Hooks <input type="checkbox"/> Bait <input type="checkbox"/> LED lights <input type="checkbox"/> Spatial and or/time closures <input type="checkbox"/> Soaking time reduction <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary </div> </div>	
Number of vessels using this type of fishing gear modification			

Table 2. Information regarding monitoring and protection of the EP leatherback nesting beaches, according to the indicators suggested in the strategic actions in this resolution.

The following questions refer to totals by country, resulting from the addition of the values from each of the beaches monitored.

MONITORING AND PROTECTION IN MONITORED NESTING BEACHES	
Monitoring Activities	
Number of leatherback beaches monitored during the year reported in this Annual Report	
Which methods are used to assess nesting in beaches (choose all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Nest/tracks count <input type="checkbox"/> Nest/tracks and nesting females count <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial census of tracks <input type="checkbox"/> Other, which _____
Have you reported the information for all the EP leatherback nesting beaches, new and historical, in the nesting beaches section (Part V)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Protection Activities in Beaches Monitored	
Percentage of the total of nests protected in the beaches monitored in the nesting season, and protection technique (including protected areas; relocation in hatcheries and other) If the value is unknown, write "not available"	
Total number of nests <i>in situ</i> (<i>In situ</i> = nests left where the turtle laid the eggs)	
% of average hatching <i>In situ</i> = nests left where the turtle laid the eggs % of hatching = total of hatchlings that hatched/total eggs If the total of hatchlings hatches is not available % of hatching = total of shells/total of eggs If the country uses another way to calculate % of hatching, please describe it	
% of average hatching in nests relocated using the following methods in the beaches monitored <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer those that apply with the % • If data is not available write "not available" • If the method is not used write "not applicable" 	
Hatcheries	
Boxes	
Same beach	
Other Which and percentage?	
Activities to control nest predation (choose all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Population control of feral, domestic, and introduced animals. <input type="checkbox"/> Protection mesh /screen <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/> None
Activities to control nest poaching (choose all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Beach patrols by police authorities <input type="checkbox"/> Beach patrols by organized community groups <input type="checkbox"/> Nest relocation <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring and research during the nesting season <input type="checkbox"/> System to address environmental complains <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/> None