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Agencies Issue Revised Recovery Plan for the Northwest Atlantic Loggerhead Sea Turtle

NOAA's Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced today the availability of the final revised recovery plan for the Northwest Atlantic population of the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*). The species is listed globally as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

"Loggerhead sea turtles face many domestic and international threats, and thousands die around the world every year," said Jim Balsiger, NOAA acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "This plan will help our agency and our partners to conserve and recover the species by providing a blueprint to address threats in the northwestern Atlantic."

The revised plan reviews and discusses the species ecology, population status and trends, and identifies threats to the loggerhead turtle in the northwestern Atlantic. It lays out a recovery strategy to address the threats, based on the best available science, and includes recovery goals and criteria. In addition, the plan identifies actions needed to address the threats to the species and achieve recovery.

An initial recovery plan for the loggerhead turtle was approved on September 19, 1984. This initial plan was a multi-species plan for all six species of sea turtles occurring in the U.S. On December 26, 1991, a separate recovery plan for the U.S. Atlantic population of the loggerhead turtle was approved. In 2001, NOAA's Fisheries Service and USFWS, which share federal jurisdiction for sea turtles, initiated the process to revise the loggerhead plan for a second time.

"This report highlights the threats that sea turtles face and offers some new approaches to better monitor their status," said Sam D. Hamilton, USFWS southeast regional director. "It will help focus recovery efforts with all the many partners to help save these magnificent creatures."

This revised plan is significant in that it identifies five unique recovery units, which comprise the population of loggerhead turtles in the Northwest Atlantic, and describes specific recovery criteria for each recovery unit.

Loggerhead turtles in the northwestern Atlantic mature to reproductive age at about 35 years. During their lifetime, they travel and live in the waters of several nations, including the U.S. They face many challenges and threats, including development and loss of nesting habitat, bycatch in fisheries, and degradation of their marine habitats. The recovery of any species takes time, but scientists say that for the loggerhead turtle it could take even longer due to the long time to reach maturity and the variety and magnitude of the threats they face.

The recovery plan is available on the web at:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/recovery/plans.htm> or <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida>

A printed copy of the plan may be obtained by sending a written request to:

NOAA Fisheries Service National Sea Turtle Coordinator
Attn: Northwest Atlantic Loggerhead Recovery Plan

Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13657
Silver Spring MD 20910

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The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service.

On the Web:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: <http://www.fws.gov>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service North Florida field office: <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida>

NOAA's Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA Protected Resources: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr>