

***NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE INSTRUCTION 02-110-14  
October 4, 2007***

***Protected Resource Management  
Endangered Species Act -- Procedures***

***STRATEGY FOR SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION & RECOVERY IN RELATION TO  
ATLANTIC OCEAN AND GULF OF MEXICO FISHERIES***

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**OPR:** F/PR (D. Cottingham)

**Certified by:** F/PR (H. Golde)

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***SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:*** The 2001 Sea Turtle Strategy (33-101-04) has been superseded by a 2007 agreement between the Director of the Office of Protected Resources, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology, the Northeast and Southeast regional Administrators, and the Northeast and Southeast Fishery Science Center Directors. Assistant Administrator Hogarth concurred with this agreement. Along with this revision, the Strategy now has a new number because it was moved from the Planning category to the Protected Resources Management category.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Helen Golde Date: December 6, 2008

Deputy Director, NMFS Office of Protected Resources



SEP 28 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.  
Assistant Administrator  
for Fisheries

FROM: *// signed //*  
Nancy B. Thompson, Ph.D.  
Director  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

*// signed //*  
Patricia Kurkul  
Regional Administrator  
Northeast Regional Office

*// signed //*  
Alex Chester  
Acting Director  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

*// signed //*  
Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.  
Regional Administrator  
Southeast Regional Office

*John G. Boreman, Jr.*  
John G. Boreman, Jr., Ph.D.  
Director  
Science and Technology

*James H. Lecky*  
James H. Lecky  
Director  
Office of Protected Resources

SUBJECT: Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation and Recovery in Relation to Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fisheries—DECISION MEMORANDUM

We have agreed to a modified approach to implement the Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation and Recovery in Relation to Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fisheries (Strategy), and seek your concurrence. The new approach (attached) establishes a steering committee to provide oversight, direction, and recommend priorities to reduce and minimize sea turtle bycatch. The changes are necessary to achieve Strategy goals to conserve and recover sea turtles, address inconsistencies across fisheries of concern, approach reducing bycatch on a gear-by-gear basis, improve information to support decision making, and ensure that federal and state fisheries are conducted consistent with the Endangered Species Act.



In 2001, five new full-time positions were approved to work on the Strategy. This 'team' of individuals originally consisted of one coordinator (Office of Protected Resources) and one representative from each of the Southeast and Northeast financial management centers (FMC). Progress occurred, but was hindered by a lack of common understanding of the Strategy goals, unclear roles and responsibilities of the five FMCs, and the inability to assign tasks across FMCs. To address these problems, staff from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO), Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEC), Northeast Regional Office (NERO), Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEC), and Office of Protected Resources (F/PR) met on September 6 and September 7, 2007. Participants reached a consensus that the Strategy is a component of the larger sea turtle conservation program with a primary emphasis to reduce sea turtle bycatch in fisheries of concern. They also recognized that many program areas (e.g., improve population assessments, promulgate regulations to reduce bycatch by gear type) were necessary to achieve Strategy goals, and no particular element was a priority or precluded another from being carried forward. Participants agreed that replacing the Strategy team with a Steering Committee consisting of senior staff from F/PR, NEC, NERO, SEC, and SERO would improve the ability to focus efforts and assign priorities across FMCs. Participants also agreed to maintain the Sea Turtle Coordinator position. The participants also agreed that should the Office of Science and Technology express interest and identify staff to provide significant input to the goals of the Strategy, their participation on the Steering Committee would be considered. Subsequent to the meeting, Jim Lecky and John Boreman conferred, and John agreed with the new approach and that his office would participate on the steering committee. Terms of Reference for the Strategy and the Steering Committee are attached.

We support this approach and seek your concurrence.

I concur: \_\_\_\_\_



10/4/07

Date

I do not concur: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Attachment

Implementation of the Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation and Recovery  
In Relation to Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fisheries  
September 2007

The Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation and Recovery in Relation to Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fisheries (Strategy) is a component of the larger NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service's North Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico sea turtle conservation program. The primary emphasis of the Strategy is to reduce sea turtle bycatch in North Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico state and federal fisheries.

### **Strategy Goals**

The overarching goals of the Strategy are to:

- Conserve and recover sea turtles
- Address inconsistencies across fisheries of concern with regard to bycatch reduction
- Approach bycatch reduction on a gear-by-gear basis
- Improve information to support decision making
- Ensure that federal and state fisheries are conducted consistent with the Endangered Species Act

### **Strategy Elements**

The following elements are intended to achieve the goals of the strategy (the ordering of these elements does not imply any priority or sequential order):

- Continue and improve population assessments of sea turtles in the North Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico
- Continue and improve the analysis and estimation of sea turtle bycatch by gear type and fishery
- Improve the evaluation of and tools for understanding the population-level effects of bycatch
- Conduct research on gear and fishing practices to reduce bycatch

- Prepare plans for reducing takes of sea turtles by gear type
- Promulgate regulations and/or implement actions to reduce bycatch by gear type

### **Steering Committee**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service is establishing a Steering Committee to implement the Strategy with the following terms of reference:

The Steering Committee to implement the Strategy for Sea Turtle Conservation and Recovery in Relation to Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fisheries will consist of one representative of the Southeast Regional Office, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Northeast Regional Office, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Office of Science and Technology, and Office of Protected Resources. The steering committee will provide oversight, direction, and recommend priorities to reduce and minimize sea turtle bycatch in state and federal fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic.

The Steering Committee will develop annual work and spending plans (and, as appropriate, outyear work plans) that identify and establish priorities for tasks to accomplish during that fiscal year and get leadership approval of those plans. The Steering Committee will form Strategy working groups, as needed, to implement tasks identified as necessary to reduce bycatch in Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic state and federal fisheries. These working groups will develop issue-specific work plans, set priorities and meeting schedules to accomplish tasks, and report back to the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members will, as appropriate, ensure that tasks assigned to their FMC are carried out within set timelines.

The Steering Committee will meet by conference call monthly and in-person annually to facilitate the aforementioned responsibilities and to assess progress. The Steering Committee will be chaired by a Steering Committee member on a rotating basis (one year term). The Chair will lead the annual meeting and the monthly calls. The sea turtle strategy coordinator will facilitate the activities of the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members will keep their senior managers informed about the Committee's plans, activities, and progress. The Steering Committee will strive to reach consensus on issues (consensus means all committee members are

willing to live with agreements and will support decisions on behalf of the Committee). Unresolved disagreements among the Steering Committee will be referred to the appropriate levels of management for resolution.