

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

92ND MEETING

Mexico City, Mexico

24-28 July 2017

PROPOSAL IATTC-92 F-1

SUBMITTED BY THE UNITED STATES

**RESOLUTION TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF TUNA
FISHING VESSELS ON SEA TURTLES**

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) gathered in Mexico City, Mexico, on the occasion of its 92nd Meeting:

Considering the adverse effects of fishing for tunas and tuna-like species on the populations of sea turtles in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) through capture and mortality;

Deeply concerned that the Eastern Pacific leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) population has declined by more than 90% over the last three decades and is critically endangered.

Guided by work in recent history that has led to advancements in best practices and technologies to avoid interactions and/or reduce the severity of interactions with sea turtles, including:

- the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) *Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations* (2005) and their recommended implementation by regional fisheries bodies and management organizations;
- FAO Common Oceans workshops (2016) on the Joint Analysis of Sea Turtle Mitigation Effectiveness, which identified the need to address sea turtle bycatch in longline fisheries;
- scientific studies that indicate that the use of large circle hooks both reduces the rate of interaction and the severity of injury and can lead to a decrease in the post-release mortality of incidentally-caught sea turtles;
- international research over the last decade on circle hooks and whole finfish bait that demonstrates a statistically significant decrease in sea turtle bycatch when such hooks are used in shallow and deep-set pelagic longline fishing; and
- International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) of Conservation Measure 3.6 *Transactions with Vessels Implementing Best Practices for Sharks and Sea Turtles*, which calls on processors, traders, importers and marketers and others in the seafood industry to conduct transactions only with longline vessels whose owners require the use of circle hooks and monofilament line, the implementation of best handling techniques, and avoidance of the use of shark lines;

Acknowledging that nearly every CPC has undertaken circle hook trials in their longline fisheries in the last decade;

Recalling the discussion at the 7th Bycatch Working Group and resulting recommendations (BYC-07);

Noting that increasing observer coverage on longline vessels from 5% to 20% would allow for more refined and targeted measures to address sea turtle bycatch; and

Affirming that additional measures should be undertaken to reduce sea turtle bycatch and mortality in tuna fisheries;

Has agreed as follows:

1. Contracting Parties, cooperating non-Parties, fishing entities and regional economic integration organizations (collectively “CPCs”) shall:
 - a. Report to the Director annually, by June 30 (beginning in 2018), in a standardized format to be developed pursuant to paragraph 4.a of this Resolution,
 - i. laws, regulations, and other measures in place to implement the *FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations*¹ (2005).
 - ii. the following information on all observed sea turtle interactions in all gear types:
 - date
 - location (latitude, longitude)
 - species identification
 - size (curved carapace length)
 - capture and release condition (e.g., live/dead)
 - fishing gear type
 - hooking location, if applicable (e.g., flipper, mouth/jaw, swallowed)
 - amount of gear left on the animal, if applicable, prior to release (e.g., estimated amount of line)
 - b. Require fishermen on vessels targeting species covered by the Convention to follow sea turtle handling and release guidelines consistent with the FAO "Best practices for sea turtle handling and release" (beginning on page 62 of the 2005 Guidelines) when any sea turtle interaction occurs.
 - c. Require fishermen to carry and, when sea turtle interactions occur, employ the necessary equipment (e.g. de-hookers, line cutters, and scoop nets) for the prompt and safe release of incidentally-caught sea turtles.
 - d. Implement observer programs for fisheries under the purview of the Commission that may have impacts on sea turtles and are not currently being observed, taking into consideration economic and practical feasibility.
 - e. Continue to improve techniques to further reduce sea turtle bycatch in all gear types used in the EPO.
2. CPCs with purse seine vessels fishing in the Convention Area shall:
 - a. Require fishermen to avoid encirclement of sea turtles to the extent practicable.
 - b. Require fishermen to take actions necessary to monitor Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) for the entanglement of sea turtles.
 - c. Require fishermen to safely release all sea turtles observed entangled in FADs and report any information on cases of doing so to the Commission, along with the required reports in paragraph 1a.
 - d. Implement, whenever possible, modified FAD designs to reduce sea turtle entanglement.
3. CPCs with longline vessels fishing in the Convention Area shall require:
 - a. Longline vessels to employ, and declare along with reports under 1a. of this resolution, at least one of the following mitigation measures:
 - a seasonal closure of fishing adjacent to leatherback inter-nesting hotspots as identified by the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles;

¹ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0725e/i0725e.pdf>

- use of only circle hooks² no smaller than 13/0
 - use of only whole finfish for bait; OR
 - another mitigation measure that has been reviewed by the IATTC scientific staff and approved by the Commission as capable of reducing sea turtle bycatch.
 - one such option, is for vessels fishing deeper than 100 meters, all hooks must be set below 100 meters depth.
3. Monitoring and Evaluation
- a. The Commission staff shall develop, no later than six months after the adoption of this resolution, and circulate for member approval, a standardized format for the reporting requirements of this measure as described in 1.a and 2.b.
- All CPC reports shall be made available through a controlled-access portal on the IATTC website for review by other CPCs.
- b. Based on these reports, the Commission staff, in conjunction with the Bycatch Working Group, shall report to the SAC every three years (with the first being in 2021) on the extent of implementation, areas needing improvement, the level of bycatch reduction that has been achieved since adoption, and recommendations for improvement including amendments to this measure.
4. Compliance
- a. The Committee for the Review of Implementation of Measures Adopted by the Commission (Implementation Review Committee) shall undertake a comprehensive review of compliance with the requirements of this resolution every three years.
- b. The Implementation Review Committee shall report to the Commission on that review and make recommendations of needed actions including areas to strengthen compliance with the resolution.
5. This resolution replaces Resolution C-07-03 To Mitigate the Impact of Tuna Fishing Vessels on Sea Turtles.
6. This Resolution shall enter into force on 1 January 2019.

² “Circle hooks” are defined as a hook with the point turned perpendicularly back to the shank to form a generally circular or oval shape.