

**INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION****93<sup>RD</sup> MEETING**

**San Diego, California (USA)  
24, 27 – 30 August 2018**

**PROPOSAL IATTC-93 K-1****SUBMITTED BY THE UNITED STATES**

**RESOLUTION TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT ON SEA TURTLES BY  
VESSELS FISHING FOR TUNA AND TUNA-LIKE SPECIES IN THE  
EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN**

*The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)* gathered in San Diego, California (USA), on the occasion of its 93<sup>rd</sup> 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);

*Deeply concerned* about the marked decline in the number of nesting female Eastern Pacific leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) in the EPO, and that the sub-population is considered by the IUCN to be Critically Endangered;

*Considering* that sea turtle catch is incidental and according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Code of Conduct, States should minimize the catch of non-target species;

*Guided* by recent work that has led to advancements in best practices and technologies to avoid interactions and/or to reduce mortality of sea turtles interacting with fishing gear, including:

- the FAO *Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations* (2005 Guidelines) 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, and
- international scientific studies on the use of circle hooks and whole finfish bait that demonstrate statistically significant reductions in the both the rate of interaction and mortality of sea turtles incidentally caught in longline gear.

*Recognizing* that the IATTC has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), which can contribute to collaboration in furtherance of the reduction of sea turtle bycatch and the implementation of this measure;

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

*Recalling* the discussions at the 7th and 8th Bycatch Working Group and resulting recommendations (BYC-07 and BYC-08);

*Noting* that increasing observer coverage and quality of data on longline vessels 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 IATTC fisheries;

*Has agreed as follows:*

1. IATTC Members and Cooperating Non-Members (“CPCs”) shall:
  - a. Require fishermen or vessel operators to:
    - i. Follow sea turtle handling and release guidelines consistent with the FAO "Best practices for sea turtle handling and release" of the 2005 Guidelines when any sea turtle interaction occurs.
    - ii. Carry safe-handling tools on board (e.g. de-hookers, line cutters, and dip nets), and when sea turtle interactions occur, employ them for the prompt and safe release of incidentally-caught sea turtles.
  - b. Implement or enhance observer programs for fisheries under the purview of the Commission that may have impacts on sea turtle populations, taking into consideration economic and practical feasibility.
  - c. Continue to participate in and promote research to identify 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.
  - b. Require fishermen to safely release all sea turtles observed entangled in FADs and report any such release to the Commission as an interaction under paragraph 4.a.ii.
3. CPCs with longline vessels fishing in the Convention Area shall require longline vessels to employ at least one of the following mitigation measures:
  - a. Use only circle hooks<sup>1</sup> no smaller than 16/0 (4.4 cm minimum width),
  - b. Use only finfish for bait (whole or cut),
  - c. Gear must be deployed such that the deepest point of the main longline between any two floats, i.e., the deepest point in each sag of the main line, is at a depth greater than 100 meters below the sea surface, OR
  - d. Another mitigation measure to reduce sea turtle bycatch that has been reviewed by the IATTC scientific staff and approved by the Commission, such as temporary closures adjacent to nesting beaches or known foraging hotspots.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation
  - a. CPCs must report to the Director annually, by June 30 (beginning in 2021), in a standardized format to be developed by the Commission staff and circulated for CPC approval no later than six months after the adoption of this resolution, the information identified here:
    - i. Laws, regulations, and other measures in place to implement the FAO *Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations*<sup>2</sup> (2005) and this Resolution.
    - ii. For vessels with observers, or when information is otherwise available from the vessel, the following information on all observed sea turtle interactions in all gear types:
      - a. date
      - b. location (latitude, longitude)
      - c. fishing gear type
      - d. species identification

<sup>1</sup> “Circle hooks” are defined as a hook with the point turned perpendicularly back to the shank to form a generally circular or oval shape, with no more than 10 degrees offset.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0725e/i0725e.pdf>

- e. size (curved carapace length)
  - f. capture and release condition (e.g., live/dead)
  - g. hooking location, if applicable (e.g., flipper, mouth/jaw, swallowed)
  - h. amount of gear left on the animal, if applicable, prior to release (e.g., estimated amount of line)
- iii. a declaration of the mitigation measure(s) employed by a CPC's longline vessels for the previous year pursuant to paragraph 3.
  - iv. implementation status of each paragraph/subparagraph requirements: "yes"; "no"; or "not applicable" (explanations required for all "no" and "not applicable" responses; "not applicable" is not a permitted response for paragraph 1 requirements)
- d. All standardized CPC reports described under 4.a shall be made available through a controlled-access portal on the IATTC website for review by other CPCs, taking into consideration not posting confidential information.
  - e. Based on these reports, the Commission staff shall, in conjunction with the Bycatch Working Group, report to the SAC and the Committee for the Review of Implementation of Measures Adopted by the Commission (Implementation Review Committee) every three years (beginning in 2023) 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.
  - f. The SAC shall consider these 3-year reviews and make recommendations for improvements of the measure.
5. Compliance
- a. The Implementation Review Committee shall undertake a comprehensive review of compliance with the requirements of this resolution every three years (beginning in 2023).
  - b. The Review Committee shall report to the Commission on that review and make recommendations of needed actions including areas to strengthen compliance with the resolution.
6. Considering the particular situation of coastal developing countries, the special fund established in Resolution C-14-03 should be strengthened through the allocation of funds, from voluntary contributions of CPCs and inclusion of specific budget lines, to facilitate the implementation of this Resolution, including for training fishermen on safe handling and release and to provide related equipment.
7. This Resolution shall enter into force on 1 January 2020, and replaces Resolution C-07-03 to Mitigate the Impact of Tuna Fishing Vessels on Sea Turtles.