



RESOLUTION TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF FISHING FOR HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH SPECIES ON SEA TURTLES

Resolution-2005-04

The Commission For The Conservation And Management Of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks In The Western And Central Pacific Ocean

In accordance with the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean:

Recognizing the ecological and cultural significance of all species of sea turtles in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO);

Recognizing that the FAO adopted Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations at its Twenty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, held in March 2005, and recommended their implementation by regional fisheries bodies and management organizations;

Noting that the recent international scientific studies on circle hooks show a statistically significant decrease in sea turtle bycatch when such hooks are used in shallow set pelagic longline fishing but that studies and trials continue in different geographic areas;

Further noting that scientific studies indicate that, with the use of circle hooks, the hooking location can lead to a decrease in post-release mortality of incidentally caught species;

Taking into account Article 5 of the WCPF Convention, resolves as follows:

1. Commission Members, Cooperating non-Members, and participating Territories (called CCMs) shall, as appropriate, implement the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations (the Guidelines) in order to reduce the incidental catch of sea turtles and to ensure the safe handling of all turtles that are captured, in order to improve their survivability.

2. The WCPFC shall encourage CCMs to collect, and provide to the WCPFC, all available information on interactions with sea turtles in fisheries managed under the WCPF Convention.
3. The Commission encourages CCMs to enhance the implementation of their respective turtle mitigation measures that are already in place (using best available scientific information on mitigation techniques) and urges them to foster collaboration with other CCMs in the exchange of information in this area.
4. The Commission urges CCMs to require that purse seine vessels flying their flags:
 - i. Avoid encirclement of sea turtles to the extent practicable and, if encircled or entangled, take all practicable measures to safely release sea turtles.
 - ii. Take all reasonable efforts whenever a sea turtle is sighted in the net to rescue the turtle before it becomes entangled in the net, including if necessary, the deployment of a speedboat.
 - iii. Stop net roll, if a turtle is entangled in the net, as soon as the turtle comes out of the water and, to the extent practicable, assist the recovery of the turtle before returning it to the water.
 - iv. Take necessary measures to monitor fish aggregating devices (FADs) to the extent practicable to release any sea turtles that become entangled and consider FAD designs and use that reduce the likelihood of sea turtle entanglement.
5. The Commission urges CCMs to:
 - i. Undertake research trials of appropriate-size circle hooks in commercial pelagic longline fisheries.
 - ii. Undertake research and trials on the use of circle hooks in recreational and artisanal fisheries;
 - iii. Require longline vessels flying their flags to carry on board and, when sea turtle interactions occur, employ the necessary equipment (e.g. de-hookers, line cutters, and scoop nets) for the prompt release of incidentally caught sea turtles.
6. The Commission shall consider measures related to the use of circle hook gear technology in longline fisheries at its annual Session in 2006, taking into account the results of research and trials.
7. The Commission urges cooperation with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission in order to share data on sea turtle bycatch and to develop and apply compatible bycatch reduction measures given the migration patterns of many species of sea turtles.
8. As the Commission develops its regional observer program and considers improving observer coverage in the Convention Area, existing observer programs should be reviewed to ensure that the appropriate information on sea turtle interactions is being collected (e.g. species identification, fate and condition at release, relevant biological information and gear configuration).
9. The Commission decides that resources available in the Special Requirements Fund may be used to assist developing State Members and territories in implementing the FAO Guidelines

to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations.

10. The Commission encourages CCMs to contribute to the Special Requirements Fund to support eligible small-island developing States, territories, and possessions in implementing this resolution, or to do so through bilateral arrangements.
11. Beginning in 2006, CCMs shall include in their Annual Report to the Commission (Part II) a report on the steps taken to implement this resolution.
12. The Commission, through the Technical and Compliance Committee, shall monitor the progress of CCMs in applying this resolution and develop relevant strategies for the further consideration of the Commission in 2007.