



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

February 26, 2004

Dear Permit Holder,

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is taking this opportunity to inform you of some precautions which are required during your fishing practices as part of your permit authorization and are part of the reasonable and prudent measures that are necessary and appropriate to minimize impacts of incidental take of sea turtles.

NOAA Fisheries requires all permitted vessels to post the sea turtle handling guidelines inside the wheelhouse (and to ensure that the owner passes it on to the captains and that it can be referred to as needed).

NOAA Fisheries provides this guidance to fishers to ensure that any sea turtle incidentally taken is handled with due care, observed for activity, and returned to the water. The following details provide a protocol for handling turtle interactions.

Sea Turtle Handling Guidelines and Resuscitation Technique

Any specimen taken incidentally during the course of fishing or scientific research activities must

be handled with due care to prevent injury to live specimens, observed for activity, and returned to the water. Sea turtles that are actively moving or determined to be dead must be released over the stern of the boat. In addition, they must be released only when fishing or scientific collection gear is not in use, when the engine gears are in neutral position, and in areas where they are unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels.

Resuscitation must be attempted on sea turtles that are comatose, or inactive by: (1) placing the turtle on its bottom shell (plastron) so that the turtle is right side up, and (2) elevating its hindquarters at least 6 inches (15.2 cm) for a period of 4 up to 24 hours. The amount of the elevation depends on the size of the turtle; greater elevations are needed for larger turtles. Periodically, rock the turtle gently left to right and right to left by holding the outer edge of the shell (carapace) and lifting one side about 3 inches (7.6 cm) then alternate to the other side. Gently touch the eye and pinch the tail (reflex test) periodically to see if there is a response. Sea turtles being resuscitated must be shaded and kept damp or moist (such as by placing a water-soaked towel over the head, carapace, and flippers) but under no circumstance be placed into a container holding water. Turtles that revive and become active must be released over the stern of the boat only when fishing or scientific collection gear is not in use, when the engine gears are



in neutral position, and in areas where they are unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels. Sea turtles that fail to respond to the reflex test or fail to move within 4 hours (up to 24, if possible) must be returned to the water in the same manner as that for actively moving turtles. A turtle is determined to be dead if the muscles are stiff (rigor mortis) and/or the flesh has begun to rot; otherwise the turtle is determined to be comatose or inactive and resuscitation attempts are necessary. Any specimen taken incidentally during the course of fishing or scientific research activities must not be consumed, sold, landed, offloaded, transshipped, or kept below deck.

Federally-permitted scallop permit holders are also reminded of the guidance provided previously in a wheelhouse card, including checking the gear for the presence of turtles before emptying the dredge bag, maintaining tow times of less than 60 minutes, and avoiding areas where sea turtles are observed to be present at the surface. Please contact NOAA Fisheries' Protected Resources Division if you have not received this wheelhouse card (978-281-9328).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia A. Kurkul". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator