

Proposed Designation of Terrestrial Critical Habitat for the Northwest Atlantic Ocean Distinct Population Segment of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*)

About the Document

Title: Proposed Designation of Terrestrial Critical Habitat for the Northwest Atlantic Ocean Distinct Population Segment of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle

Purpose: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has prepared a proposal to designate critical habitat on public and private beaches in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. Critical habitat for the loggerhead sea turtle would be designated on 1189.9 kilometers (739.3 miles) of island and mainland coastal beaches. The proposed critical habitat is located in Brunswick, Carteret, Hanover, Onslow, and Pender Counties, North Carolina; Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton, and Georgetown Counties, South Carolina; Camden, Chatham, Liberty, and McIntosh Counties, Georgia; Bay, Brevard, Charlotte, Collier, Duval, Escambia, Flagler, Franklin Gulf, Indian River, Lee, Manatee, Martin, Monroe, Palm Beach, Sarasota, St. Johns, St. Lucie, and Volusia Counties, Florida; Baldwin County, Alabama; and Jackson County, Mississippi. A proposed regulation was published in the Federal Register on March 25, 2013, requesting public review and comment.

About the Peer Review Process

Type of Review: Influential

Date of Peer Review: Peer review will occur between March 25, 2013 and May 24, 2013.

Estimated Dissemination Date of the Final Rulemaking Document: July 7, 2014.

Process: The Service will conduct external peer review of this document through formal requests for peer review from four independent scientific reviewers experienced with the biology and ecology of this species. These reviewers are located at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Florida International University, and National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Fisheries Science Center (as a National Research Council fellow). Peer review of the scientific information used in our critical habitat determination and the validity of the data will be requested. The Service will use the information received from the peer review, as appropriate, in the final determination of terrestrial critical habitat designation for the Northwest Atlantic Ocean Distinct Population Segment of the loggerhead sea turtle.

About Public Participation

Public comments on the proposed critical habitat designation will be sought with a proposed rule published in the Federal Register and by notice to interested parties. A public hearing will be held if requested. The Service will consider all comments received prior to publishing a final determination.

The Service published a notice in the Federal Register of the proposed designation of critical habitat for the Northwest Atlantic Distinct Population Segment of the loggerhead sea turtle. Once a final determination is made, the Service will publish a notice in the Federal Register on the final designation of critical habitat, including a summary of the results of the peer review. This peer review plan is made available on this website to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review.

Contact

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