



Pêches et Océans
Canada

Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Directeur général

Director General

Camille Jean Pierre Manel
Executive Secretary
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
Corazón de María, 8. 28002
Madrid, SPAIN

Dear M. Manel,

This letter aims to correct Canada's inadvertent non-reporting on steps it has taken to implement Recommendation 22-12, as required in paragraph 8 of that recommendation.

Canada's primary fisheries legislation, the *Fisheries Act*, its regulations, and associated policies afford protection to sea turtles. As per Section 33 of the Fishery (General) Regulations, all incidental catch must be returned to the water and, where alive, in the manner that causes the least harm. This applies to the incidental catch of all sea turtle species. In addition, Canada's Policy on Managing Bycatch, a component of Canada's Sustainable Fisheries Framework, is national in scope and applies to all commercial, recreational, and Aboriginal (Indigenous) fisheries licensed and/or managed by DFO under the *Fisheries Act*. The policy also applies to fisheries licensed and/or managed by DFO operating outside of Canada's exclusive economic zone. The objectives of the policy are: 1) to ensure that Canadian fisheries are managed in a manner that supports the sustainable harvesting of aquatic species and that minimizes the risk of fisheries causing serious or irreversible harm to bycatch species; and 2) to account for total catch, including retained and non-retained bycatch.

The licence holder/operator is required to provide information regarding interactions with species at risk in the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) Monitoring Document immediately after the interaction occurred. Both species encountered in Canadian fisheries—Leatherback and Loggerhead sea turtles—are listed as species at risk under SARA. For Leatherback sea turtles, date of interaction, position in latitude and longitude, and condition of turtle on release (alive or dead) must be included. If a species at risk is caught, the licence holder/operator is required to submit the SARA Monitoring Document to the Dockside Monitoring Company with the commercial Monitoring document.

The licence holder/operator, pursuant to subsection 83(4) of the SARA, S.C. 2002, c.29 and the Recovery Strategy for the Leatherback Sea Turtle, must release incidentally captured Leatherback Sea Turtles to the place where they were taken, and, in cases where they are alive, in a manner that causes the least harm.



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Completion of the logbook is a requirement for fishers who have been issued a SARA permit or SARA-compliant fishing license or whose fishing activity has been exempted in a SARA recovery document for a protected species and where reporting of by-catch of that species is required. One log must be submitted for each fishing trip whether or not species at risk were caught.

Fishery Officers inspect fishers, catches, documents and gear when boarding fishing vessels at sea and in port. This includes ensuring that the SARA monitoring documents are on board and completed as required, the dehooking/disentanglement kits are onboard and contain the required equipment, and there are no SARA-listed species retained.

To ensure the safe release of sea turtles, Canada's pelagic longline fleet has had a Code of Conduct in place since the early 2000s, and its adherence is a mandatory licence condition. Vessels flagged to Canada must carry on board safe handling, disentanglement and release equipment and it is mandatory for harvesters to release any incidentally harvested sea turtles in a manner that maximizes the probability of their survival.

Training on dehooking and safe release is a mandatory requirement for vessel operators and licence holders. At least one member of the crew on board must hold a valid certificate identifying that they have successfully completed a DFO-approved dehooking and disentanglement course, which are offered annually by the Canadian Sea Turtle Network. A copy of the valid certificate must be on board the vessel and be provided to a Fishery Officer upon request.

Moreover, conditions of license mandate the use corrodible circle hooks when fishing with pelagic longline gear. The Canadian fishing industry does not use hooks smaller than 16/0 in these fisheries. Canadian harvesters also implement other bycatch mitigation measures such as a continued fishing strategy of using compact soak times, a prohibition on wire leaders, and the sole use of shallow pelagic longline sets, which allow a caught turtle to come to the surface to breath.

Please do not hesitate to reach out for any further information and accept the expression of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Waddell

Head of Delegation to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas