



State of Washington

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)

Name of Proposal: DNS 17-001: UPLISTING LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLES FROM A STATE THREATENED SPECIES TO A STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES

Description of Proposal:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has evaluated the population status of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*), which is currently a state threatened species. Two rules are proposed to be amended: WAC 232-12-014 and WAC 232-12-011. WAC 232-12-014 identifies endangered species in Washington as those that are seriously threatened with extinction in the state and are in need of recovery actions to restore populations to healthy levels. WAC 232-12-011 identifies species classified as protected, which are designated into three subcategories: threatened, sensitive, and other. Threatened species are those that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.

Pursuant to WAC 232-12-297 (6.1.1) and (6.2), WDFW is proposing to amend WAC 232-12-014 and WAC 232-12-011 and is requesting that the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the Department's recommendation to uplist the Loggerhead Sea Turtle from a state threatened species to a state endangered species. Rationale for this action are presented in the *Draft Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Green and Loggerhead Sea Turtles*. The report provides an analysis of the factors cited in WAC 232-12-297(7.1.1) through (7.1.5) and considers all information relevant to the status of the species in Washington as well as in the nation.

As described in the report, the department has reviewed all relevant data pertaining to the population status of Loggerhead Sea Turtles in Washington and determined that the status should be uplisted to Endangered. Loggerhead sea turtles occurring in Washington are part of the federally endangered North Pacific distinct population segment (DPS). This DPS migrates from nesting sites in Japan to forage in pelagic and coastal waters off the west coast of North America, mainly in Mexico and southern California, but rarely observed reaching Oregon and Washington. A substantial decline in the North Pacific DPS occurred over the last half of the 20th century and current nesting numbers represent a fraction of historical nesting levels. Global population trends for this species indicate a decrease of 47% over the past 100 to 150 years. Even the loss of a few individuals holds potential consequences when combined with other impacts. The population is wide-ranging and migratory, and threats are widespread across the nesting and marine portions of their ranges. Significant known threats North Pacific Loggerhead Sea Turtle DPS are harvest of eggs, juveniles and adults; incidental capture in commercial and recreational fisheries; destruction and modification of nesting habitat; and marine debris. Sea turtles are also particularly vulnerable to climate change, which may impact all stages of their life histories. Given the small declining population and significant and severe threats to Loggerhead Sea Turtles, WDFW recommends that the status of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle in the state be changed from threatened to endangered.

Draft versions of the *Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Green and Loggerhead Sea Turtles* were evaluated by the scientific community, including both WDFW scientists and external

scientists. Members of the public are also invited to review the draft periodic status review during a public comment period that extends from November 15, 2016 to February 13, 2017. After the close of the public review period, the Department will prepare the final periodic status review and delisting recommendation.

The final listing recommendation is planned to be presented to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission on April 14-15, 2017 and the Commission is expected to take action on the recommendation during that same meeting.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
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Location of Proposal, including street, if any: The loggerhead sea turtle inhabits temperate, subtropical, and tropical waters of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, as well as the Mediterranean Sea (Figure 1). In the eastern Pacific, loggerheads have been reported as far north as Alaska, and as far south as Chile. Rare sightings are reported from the coasts of Washington and Oregon. Loggerheads in the North Pacific DPS (defined as from the equator to 60°N) originate from nesting sites in the Japanese archipelago and forage in pelagic waters and off the west coast of Mexico, including the Baja Peninsula, which provide important developmental habitats for juveniles. Within U.S. jurisdiction, individuals from this DPS are frequently found near Southern California and Hawai'i, but no nesting has been documented.

Lead Agency: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

WDFW has determined that this proposal will likely not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, state law¹ does not require an environmental impact statement (EIS). WDFW made this determination of nonsignificance (DNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this DNS according to state rules.² We will **not act on this proposal for 30 days** from the date we issued the DNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or DNS. We must receive your comments within 30 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on February 13, 2017**.

Method of Comment: The following procedures shall govern the method to comment on agency SEPA proposals. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal.

You can submit your comments any one of the following ways:

- Email to SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946;
- Mail to the address below.

Responsible Official: Lisa Wood

Position/Title: SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

Address: 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>. Once the status is posted as final,

applicants and permittees may take action on the proposal. When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.¹

If you have questions about this DNS or the details of the proposal, contact Lisa Wood at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call her at (360) 902-2260.

DATE OF ISSUE: January 13, 2017

SIGNATURE:



Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-340(2).

SEPA Log Number: 17-001.dns