

Conf. 9.20 (Rev.)*

Guidelines for evaluating marine turtle ranching proposals submitted pursuant to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)¹

RECOGNIZING that, as a general rule, use of sea turtles has not been conducted in a sustainable manner and has led to the decline of sea turtle populations;

RECOGNIZING also that other factors such as habitat loss, pollution and incidental catch are seriously impacting sea turtle populations;

RECALLING that Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)¹ adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000) and amended at its 14th and 15th meetings (The Hague, 2007; Doha, 2010), recommends that, for a proposal to transfer a species from Appendix I to Appendix II for the purpose of ranching, the operation “must be primarily beneficial to the conservation of the local population”;

NOTING that the unique biology of sea turtles makes their sustainable use difficult and imposes special restraints on their exploitation, which require the application of rigorous controls;

RECOGNIZING that the demand for marine turtle products in some States stimulates illegal trade both nationally and internationally;

NOTING that the cooperation of range States greatly enhances the conservation of marine turtle populations;

UNDERSTANDING that, because of the behaviour of marine turtles of returning to specific beaches to nest, range States have a special responsibility to protect marine-turtle nesting habitat and nesting females during the breeding season;

RECOGNIZING that sustainable use may have potential benefits for the conservation of marine turtles and their habitats;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

RECOMMENDS that:

- a) any Party seeking to allow international trade in products of sea turtle ranches satisfy all the requirements of the Convention and Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)²;
- b) any Party seeking to transfer a marine turtle population from Appendix I to Appendix II pursuant to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)¹ provide information in accordance with the guidelines contained in the Annex to this Resolution; and
- c) any Party whose population of marine turtles is transferred to Appendix II pursuant to this Resolution and Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)¹ ensure that procedures for regular adequate reporting to the Secretariat exist and are implemented. Failure to satisfy this requirement and to demonstrate conservation benefit to the population or compliance with other requirements of Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)¹ may result in the application of paragraph c) of that Resolution under the last RECOMMENDS.

* Amended at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and corrected by the Secretariat following the 14th and 15th meetings.

¹ Corrected by the Secretariat following the 11th, 14th and 15th meetings of the Conference of the Parties: originally referred to Resolution Conf. 10.18, later corrected to Resolution Conf. 11.16, then to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP14).

² Corrected by the Secretariat following the 11th, 14th and 15th meetings of the Conference of the Parties: originally referred to Resolution Conf. 5.16 (Rev.), later corrected to Resolution Conf. 11.16, then to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP14).

Guidelines for evaluating marine turtle ranching proposals submitted pursuant to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)¹

1. **Resource management**

A. Biological information

The proposal should provide information on the biology, management and geographic extent of each population that will be affected throughout its range. Geographic extent should be described using sound scientific techniques. Range is defined as all the range States and waters in which the population occurs.

The following characteristics of the population of marine turtles that is the subject of the ranching proposal should be detailed:

- a) Population distribution. Describe the current (and, if possible, the historical) nesting grounds, feeding areas and migratory range of the population. Nesting areas from which eggs and/or hatchlings are to be taken should be described in detail.
- b) Population status and trend. Describe the population and its trend using indices of abundance for the different life stages with particular attention to the age/size structure of the population.
- c) Reproduction. Provide an estimate or calculation of the annual reproductive rate or size of the annual production (e.g. numbers of eggs and/or hatchlings).
- d) Population mortality. Provide an estimate of hatching success and estimates of human-induced mortalities of the population.

B. National management

A prerequisite for approval of a ranching proposal will be the effective implementation of a national management plan for marine turtles. The plan should include:

- a) Monitoring. A description of the annual programme to monitor population trends and mortality rates.
- b) Habitat protection. All important nesting beaches, feeding grounds and other significant habitats should be protected from disruption including development, urbanization and pollution.
- c) Harvest regulation. Harvesting for ranches should normally be restricted to eggs and/or hatchlings. The annual numbers (and percentage) of eggs and/or hatchlings proposed for removal to the ranch must be specified. The proposed harvest rate should also be presented as a proportion of the natural production of the population being harvested for ranches.
- d) Protection of the population. Human induced mortality of marine turtles, such as uncontrolled harvests, incidental catch in fisheries and pollution of habitat should be identified and mechanisms be in place to control such mortalities.
- e) Rules for stopping harvests. Predetermined threshold values of population trends and changes in status, mortality or habitat should be proposed, the passing of which would automatically trigger the suspension of harvests, and the initiation of additional conservation measures.

C. Regional management

Because of the migratory behaviour of marine turtles, that segment of the population occurring within the jurisdiction of any one State can not be considered in isolation. Any management of the population should involve the range States sharing the majority of the population.

¹ Corrected by the Secretariat following the 11th, 14th and 15th meetings of the Conference of the Parties: originally referred to Resolution Conf. 10.18, later corrected to Resolution Conf. 11.16, then to Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP14).

A Party submitting a ranching proposal shall take the lead in the development and effective implementation of a regional management protocol designed to enhance the conservation of the population.

- a) Activities undertaken by the proponent to develop cooperative regional management among the range States sharing the majority of the population should be described. Regional management should entail cooperative mechanisms for:
 - i) assessment of the conservation status of the population throughout its range and identification of key recruitment areas (e.g. breeding and nesting sites);
 - ii) regular monitoring of population trends, involving an assessment of sources of annual mortality including an assessment of the impact of the ranching operation;
 - iii) effective protection of important nesting beaches and other essential habitats (e.g. feeding areas);
 - iv) regulating where necessary harvests and domestic sale of marine turtle specimens; and
 - v) effective controls, sufficient to prevent the stimulation of illegal trade in products from wild populations.
- b) The regional management protocol designed to enhance conservation of the marine turtles in the wild should also document existing conservation legislation and trade controls by range States and provide a forum through which more effective or complementary trade controls, enforcement activities and other conservation measures may be developed.

2. Trade controls

Proponents must take every reasonable measure to ensure that the trade in products from approved ranches does not stimulate an increase in trade from other sources in a manner detrimental to the survival of the population, other populations or other species of marine turtle, or serve as a cause for such trade. Therefore, the proponent Party should ensure that both it and any country to which the products of the ranching operation are destined have adequate legal frameworks and administrative measures for monitoring and reporting, and adequate local and national enforcement capabilities before international trade is authorized. In particular each proponent Party must:

- a) Agree that exports of marine turtle products derived from the population covered by its proposal will be restricted to those from the ranching operation, in specified amounts (i.e. a quota may be set) that can be met by proposed ranch production. Importing States shall undertake to provide documentation of their domestic laws to regulate the import, re-export, possession, sale, purchase and transport of marine turtles and their parts and derivatives, and the measures taken to control existing stockpiles of such specimens.
- b) Document its domestic laws and enforcement mechanisms (including those in any territories and overseas political units) that regulate the taking of marine turtles from the wild and the possession, sale, purchase, transport, import and export of marine turtles, their parts and derivatives.
- c) Undertake registration of any existing stockpiles of marine turtle parts and derivatives held within its territorial jurisdiction and instigate marking and control systems to ensure that such items are readily distinguishable from similar items deriving from approved ranches.
- d) Describe marking and tracking procedures for all parts and derivatives from approved ranches that will allow the unambiguous identification of ranch products, including methods for marking products and packages, packaging types, transport methods, shipping routes, product documentation, secure storage of products, inventory control up to the point of export and specification of the maximum quantities of products (quotas) to be exported annually.

3. The ranching operation

To satisfy recommendation e) ii) under the first RECOMMENDS of Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)¹, the proponent should provide information on:

- a) Financial operation. Identity of the owners and a business and financial plan taking account of market demand and production goals and objectives.
- b) Physical plant. In accordance with technical and professional standards, descriptions of:
 - i) site, including geographical location, lay out, size and technical specifications;
 - ii) facilities for maintaining stock, food storage, quarantine, slaughter and processing, refrigeration and freezing;
 - iii) seawater source, including circulation, filtration, waste disposal and quality control systems; and
 - iv) staff, including numbers and qualifications of technical and management personnel and numbers of support staff.
- c) Operating procedures, taking account of:
 - i) stock collection, including location of source sites, methods used in collection and removal of specimens, age- and size-classes of specimens (e.g. eggs, hatchlings), collecting seasons, number of specimens to be collected each year and the proportion of natural annual production that the harvest represents, methods of handling and transport to the ranching operation, and injury levels and mortality during collection and transport;
 - ii) stocking rates, including the number or weight of turtles per 1,000 litres of sea water and square metres of surface area;
 - iii) production schedules, including production profiles by age- and size-class, growth rates, methods used to identify ranch stocks, culling procedures exclusive of harvesting, reports of non-harvest mortality, methods of disposal of carcasses from non-harvest mortality and number of specimens by age- and size-class that will be harvested each year;
 - iv) feeding, including sources of feed, general nutritional composition, evaluation of additives and contaminants, and feeding regimen (amount, frequency and method of distribution);
 - v) health care, including monitoring methods, veterinary care and treatment procedures; and
 - vi) slaughter procedures, including specimen selection, methods used to collect and transport specimens to the processing site, humane slaughter technique, processing techniques, waste disposal.
- d) Record keeping, indicating procedures followed in inspecting and monitoring records maintained by the ranching operation.
- e) Benefits, indicating how local people would benefit from the operation.

4. Summary statement describing benefit to the population

Proponents should summarize the legal and enforcement mechanisms that will prevent detrimental impact of the renewal of legal trade and summarize the benefits resulting or expected to result from the management actions implemented for the population to be harvested for ranches including regional management protocols.

5. Reporting

Proponents that achieve a transfer of their national population of marine turtles from Appendix I to Appendix II subject to this Resolution should include in their annual reports updated information on: population status and trends; any change in the area of beaches that provide suitable nesting habitat; any change in enforcement effort; and amendments to cooperative

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agreements to preserve and manage the marine turtle resource. Reports should also detail the nature of and progress in developing and implementing effective regional management protocols.