

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON SEA TURTLES

Sea Turtles and Recreational Hook-and-Line Fishing

Five sea turtle species – green, hawksbill (rare visitor to our region), Kemp’s Ridley, leatherback and loggerhead turtles – are found in the U.S. Atlantic Ocean. All of these turtles are threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

[Sea Turtle Identification and information.](#)

When on the water, please keep a watch for sea turtles and aggregations of jellyfish, which are leatherback prey. Sea turtles can be accidentally entangled or hooked in fishing gear. Requirements of handling sea turtles and/or resuscitating comatose turtles can be found at 50 CFR 223.206(d)(1). In addition, follow the recommendations below to reduce injuries in you entangle or hook a sea turtle.

1. First, call your local stranding network responder – **Mystic Aquarium at 860-572-5955 x107**, [Northeast Sea Turtle Stranding Network Map and Information](#), the USCG on Channel 16, or NOAA Fisheries Marine Animal Hotline at 866-755-NOAA (6622).
2. Safety First! Keep your hands away from the turtle’s mouth and flippers.

While waiting for the responder:

3. Secure the turtle.
 - a. If fishing from a pier or land, use a net or lift by the shell to bring the turtle on the pier or land. **DO NOT lift by the hook or by pulling on the line.** If the turtle is too large to net or lift, try to walk it to the beach.
 - b. If fishing from a vessel and the turtle is small enough to lift safely, use a dip net or lift by the shell to bring the turtle on board.
4. When you have control of the sea turtle, use blunt scissors or a knife to cut the line. Leave at least 2 feet of line to allow for dehooking by trained responders.
5. Leave the hook in place as removing it could cause more harm.
6. Keep the turtle out of direct sunlight and cover the shell with a damp towel. If on land, wait for the response team to arrive. If on the water, please follow the instructions you receive from the response team.
7. If you cannot reach the response team and are unable to bring the turtle to shore or on your vessel, cut the line as short as possible before releasing the turtle.
8. When returning a sea turtle to the water, it must be released over the stern of the boat when fishing gear is not in use, the engine gears are in the neutral position and in areas where it is unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels.

Please also report any sea turtles or large whales that are injured, entangled in other gear, stranded on the beach or floating dead to the USCG on Channel 16 or the NOAA hotline at 866-755-NOAA (6622). For more information, please contact our Protected Resources Division at 978-281-9328. We appreciate all your help!

“NOAA Fisheries Informational Notice issued June 19, 2015.”