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NATIONAL  
OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC  
ADMINISTRATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**NOAA FISHERIES AND U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE DETERMINE THAT  
ACTION TO CHANGE LISTING STATUS OF TWO SUBPOPULATIONS OF  
LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLES IS NOT WARRANTED**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), an agency of the Department of Interior (collectively "the Services"), have determined that reclassifying the Northern and Florida Panhandle subpopulations of the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) is not warranted.

All loggerhead sea turtles are now listed as threatened throughout their range. In \_\_\_\_, 2002, Turtle Island Institute petitioned the services to designate the Northern and Florida Panhandle subpopulations as distinct population segments (DPSs) with endangered status and to designate critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA).

The Services have reviewed the petition, the literature cited in the petition, other available literature and information, and consulted with biologists and researchers familiar with the loggerhead sea turtle. The determination that the Northern and Florida Panhandle subpopulations of the loggerhead sea turtle do not meet the criteria for reclassification as DPSs under the ESA is based on that review and thus cannot have a different listing status than the rest of the population. Thus, since the subpopulations are interdependent for the purposes of achieving recovery, the services have concluded that they are not DPSs.

Although the petitioned action was found to not be warranted, NOAA Fisheries is aware of the importance of the subpopulations. That knowledge has been integrated into the extensive conservation efforts being applied to this species. In addition, a multi-faceted recovery team is evaluating the designation of the subpopulations as separate recovery units to be included in a revised Atlantic recovery plan for loggerheads. Designation of subpopulations as recovery units would underscore the importance and interdependence of the subpopulations and help us develop recovery actions that benefit individual subpopulations and to most effectively conserve loggerheads as a species.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov> .