

Originally published May 29 2009

U.S. Government Sued by Conservation Groups for Failing to Protect Sea Turtles

by Mike Adams, the Health Ranger, NaturalNews Editor

(NaturalNews) Sea turtle populations have fallen dramatically in the coastal areas of the United States over the past several decades, with some sea turtle populations plummeting as much as 80 percent. Three key conservation groups are now suing the U.S. government for failing to enforce laws designed to protect these endangered marine species: Oceana (www.Oceana.org), the Center for Biological Diversity (www.BiologicalDiversity.org) and the Turtle Island Restoration Network (www.SeaTurtles.org).

At stake is the future of not merely sea turtles, but the biological diversity they represent. If nothing is done to stop the population collapse, sea turtle populations could become "functionally extinct," the groups warn.

And yet each of these three groups has been trying to do something: Twelve months ago, they filed petitions with the **National Marine Fisheries Service** and the **United States Fish and Wildlife Service**. But the petitions were essentially ignored. These government offices sat back and watched sea turtle populations continue to decline even as they failed to enforce their own laws and regulations that would have protected the sea turtles.

"This is a classic example of the Fisheries Service dragging its feet," said David Allison, senior campaign director at Oceana. "Sea turtles can't continue to wait for these essential protections. More sea turtles will be caught and killed with each passing day, pushing them closer to extinction."

The petitions call for sea turtles in some areas to be upgraded to "endangered" status -- a move that would bring them additional protections. They also call for strengthened protections of sea turtles' nesting beaches and marine habitats.

The situation is urgent. "Loggerhead and leatherback sea turtles have roamed [the oceans](#) for thousands of years, but they might not make it into the next century if we don't do more to protect them right now," said Miyoko Sakashita, staff attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Delaying protective actions while threats like being captured and killed by indiscriminate commercial [fishing](#) gear, nesting beach destruction, and climate change continue to accelerate makes it that much harder to pull the species back from the brink."

What's most astonishing about all this, of course, is that **laws already exist to protect sea turtles, but the U.S. government has failed to enforce them**. "We'll see the end of sea turtles in our lifetimes if we don't stop them from drowning on fishing hooks and in nets," said Teri Shore, program director at the Turtle Island Restoration Network. "The U.S. must enforce its own laws."

NaturalNews strongly supports the efforts of these groups, and we recently donated \$5,000 in advertising space to Oceana.org to help spread awareness about the need to save our sea turtles.

Again, this isn't merely about sea turtles. The loss of sea turtle population is a classic "canary in a coal mine" scenario, where the declining populations of these ancient creatures is merely an indicator of the accelerating collapse of marine life on our planet. **Human beings are destroying the oceans** through rampant overfishing, pollution and even carbon dioxide emissions (which acidify the ocean water). If we continue this course, we we'll lose much more than sea turtles: We'll lose the aquatic biodiversity that ultimately keeps us all alive.

Destroy the oceans and you ultimately destroy yourself. Modern human civilization hasn't yet achieved the basic maturity to understand that, unfortunately. But non-profit groups like Oceana.org are working very

hard to change this attitude and teach people about the importance of marine habitats (and the creatures that live in them).

Please consider offering your own financial support to these groups, as they are engaged in very important work that could play a huge role in keeping our planet habitable for the next thousand years.

Speak your mind to the U.S. government offices now being sued

Help get the message across that **sea turtles are worth saving**. Contact the **National Marine Fisheries Service** and urge them (politely, please) to help save the sea turtles:

Website: www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Email: cyber.fish@noaa.gov

Phone numbers: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/contac...>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Website: <http://www.fws.gov/>

Contact details of nationwide offices and phone numbers: <http://www.fws.gov/offices/>

Be nice when talking to these people, but also be firm. You have a right to speak your mind to these government officials. After all, your taxes pay their salaries!