

Environmental groups call for end to turtle harvests

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TULSA, Okla. (AP) - Environmental groups are asking Texas, Georgia, Florida and Oklahoma to stop the commercial harvest of wild turtles.

Environmentalists are concerned over the threat of depleting the turtle population and say the turtle meat may be contaminated by heavy metals.

A study by Oklahoma State University concluded that thousands of freshwater turtles are being removed, especially from waterways in the southeastern part of the state: Deep Fork, Kiamichi, Mountain Fork and Little River. The meat is often exported to Asia.

Jeff Miller, a conservation advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity, said more research is needed to determine the impact of commercial harvesting.

An Oklahoma commercial turtle harvester license costs \$40 for residents and \$200 for nonresidents. It allows the catching of an unlimited number of turtles in any waters except for the state's five scenic river areas in northeastern and eastern Oklahoma.