

# Latina Lista

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### From Virginia to Mississippi, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designate beach areas critical habitat for loggerhead sea turtles

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LatinaLista

Last week, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed designating 739 miles of beach, spanning Virginia to Mississippi, as critical habitat for the loggerhead sea turtle.

If finalized, this designation would be the first time the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will have protected imperiled sea turtles' habitat in mainland United States.

Worldwide, there are seven species of sea turtles. Five species are found in U.S. waters, and all five are recognized as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Loggerhead sea turtles make some of the longest oceanic journeys of all sea turtles; some travel thousands of miles just to feed, breed, and nest. Loggerheads get their name from their distinctive large jaw, which they use to scoop up and crush hard-shelled prey.

The Fish and Wildlife Service listed Loggerheads as threatened in 1978, but never designated critical habitat for them. Critical habitat helps wildlife managers better conserve the species and helps planners understand which areas require priority protection. Protected



Loggerhead sea turtle

habitat should help put loggerheads on the path to recovery. Species listed under the Endangered Species Act with designated critical habitat are twice as likely to be recovering than species without critical habitat.

In the U.S., 90% of loggerhead nesting occurs in Florida, mainly in just six coastal counties on the east coast.

Loggerheads visit U.S. beaches from April to September to lay their eggs. They require unobstructed passage through nearshore waters, and beaches that are free from human-made obstacles. When the hatchlings emerge from their nests approximately sixty days later, they immediately seek out the ocean; however, light

pollution can derail this life-saving effort by drawing the hatchlings away from the water.

Healthy beaches for nesting sea turtles and their hatchlings are swimmable, fishable, beautiful beaches for humans to enjoy as well. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is accepting comments on the proposal through May 24, 2013. Please let it know that you support protecting habitat for these national treasures.