



## Courthouse News Service

# Turtles in Trouble: Conservationists Take on Trump

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WASHINGTON (CN) — Conservationists brought a federal complaint Wednesday that accuses the Trump administration of hastening the extinction of the green sea turtle by failing to designate habitats and to earmark funding.

Coastal development, beach armoring and rising sea levels all pose long-term threats to the sea turtle habitats, while the species faces imminent danger every day from plastic pollution, boat-propeller strikes and fishing operations, according to the complaint filed this morning in Washington.

“We are just running out of beach and these nesting sea turtles are getting pinched in this coastal squeeze between human encroachment and rising sea levels,” said Jaclyn Lopez with the Center for Biological Diversity, one of three organizations behind the Endangered Species Act suit.

Turtles are at risk even in their first moments of life, with hatchlings disoriented by beachside lights often failing to reach the sea to reunite with their mother. But experts say the greatest risk to the species’ survival is greenhouse gases that lead to rising sea levels and warming ocean waters.



Sea turtle seen while scuba diving. (CNS Photo/BILL GIRDNER)

“As the temperatures warm, the sex of sea turtles is temperature dependent and is determined when they’re in their nest as eggs,” Lopez explained in an interview, adding that researchers observing nesting grounds in Florida have recorded near 100% female turtle hatchlings in recent years.

The dangerous mating ratio and disappearing beaches foretells a dire future for the turtles. “We are going to see a population crash,” Lopez said.

Oil exploration and commercial fishing in habitats where sea turtles migrate also pose a serious threat.

Compounding its failure to designate federally protected beaches for the green sea turtle, as mandated under the Endangered Species Act, Lopez said the Trump administration is hurting the species by rolling back regulations on the shrimping industry.

“We are seeing shortcuts being taken and decisions being made on political calculations rather than the best available science of what the species needs to survive and recover,” she said.

Green sea turtles can be found around the world including in many locations across the U.S. such as Florida and Hawaii, where turtles drive a profitable tourism industry. “People come to stay up all night with just the chance to monitor hatchlings,” Lopez said of the turtle’s Floridian fanbase.

John Ewald, a spokesman for the National Marine Fisheries Service, declined to comment, citing agency policy on pending litigation.