

A CALL TO ACTION ON THE FATE OF OUR OCEANS



An International Proposal by Leading Scientists to Save Endangered Marine Life from Extinction

As scientists concerned about the health of our oceans, we have joined together in support of fishing policies that ensure the long-term survival of targeted fish populations, endangered marine species and the fishing-related economy.

In recent decades the impact of commercial fishing on ocean ecosystems has dramatically increased, and we are confronted with the unprecedented reality that we are rapidly depleting the oceans' resources. The oceans, once mistakenly thought to be inexhaustible, clearly are not.

Indiscriminate commercial fishing practices wastefully harm and kill millions of non-targeted animals per year, causing unsustainable mortality to sea turtles, sea birds, bluefin tuna, swordfish and sharks.

The Pacific leatherback sea turtle is at the top of the list of species being driven to the brink of extinction by increased efforts of global industrial fishing. The Pacific leatherback turtle's nesting population has plummeted from 91,000 in 1980 to fewer than 5,000 in 2002. Recent studies warn that unless immediate and significant steps are taken, the world's largest and most wide-ranging sea turtle will soon become extinct.

The plight of the leatherback sea turtle foreshadows a host of extinction events that may significantly alter the oceans' ecosystem functions. Leatherbacks have swum the Earth's oceans for over 100 million years and are part of a complex web of life that is rapidly unraveling. If we allow the leatherback to vanish from the oceans, we alter the balance that exists amongst predators and prey and risk the future of a host of other marine species.

Leading sea turtle biologists and ocean experts recognize that pelagic longline and gillnet fishing pose the principal immediate threats to Pacific leatherback turtles at sea, and recognize that measures that protect leatherbacks at sea also will benefit a wide assemblage of marine species that are either targeted or incidentally captured by these indiscriminate fishing methods.

WE THE UNDERSIGNED:

• *Call on the United Nations, United States and other nations to institute a moratorium on pelagic longline, gillnet and other fishing techniques that harm Pacific leatherback sea turtles until such activities can be conducted without harm to the species;*

• *Urge fishing nations to reduce the overall quantity of fishing effort;*

• *Call on pelagic longline and gillnet fisheries to assess their impacts and implement precautionary fishing principles in other impacted ocean basins, to avoid similar extinction crises;*

• *Request that the governments of all nations where Pacific leatherback turtles nest immediately protect these sites, stop egg collection and maximize hatchling survival; and*

• *Urge that transitional aid be allocated to fishers and communities who are impacted by shifts in policy that move the human species toward the sustainable use of the oceans.*

The measures outlined above will help people worldwide who depend on the oceans for their livelihood and sustenance. And we feel these actions are necessary to enable marine species such as the leatherback sea turtle to survive and flourish.

Over 400 leading scientists have signed this letter as of February 6, 2003, including:

HOMERO ARIDJIS, President
Grupo de los Cien, Mexico

MARIO BOZA
Wildlife Conservation Society, Costa Rica

LARRY B. CROWDER, Professor of Marine Biology
Duke University Marine Laboratory, USA

PARTHA DASGUPTA, Professor
Faculty of Economics & Politics,
University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

PAUL K. DAYTON, Professor of Natural History
Scripps Institution of Oceanography, USA

SYLVIA EARLE, Explorer in Residence
National Geographic Society, USA

DAVID EHRENFELD, Professor of Biology
Rutgers University, USA

PAUL R. EHRLICH, President
Center for Conservation Biology, Stanford University, USA

THOMAS EISNER, Professor of Biology
Cornell University, USA

DANIEL H. JANZEN, Professor of Biology
University of Pennsylvania, USA

THOMAS E. LOVEJOY, Conservation Biologist,
USA

FRANK V. PALADINO, Professor & Chair of the Biology Dept.
Indiana-Purdue University, USA

PETER H. RAVEN, Director
Missouri Botanical Garden and Washington
University in St. Louis, USA

CARL SAFINA, President
Blue Ocean Institute, USA

JAMES R. SPOTILA, Professor of Environmental Science
Drexel University, USA

EDWARD O. WILSON
University Research Professor, Emeritus
Harvard University, USA

Affiliations for identification purposes only.



www.seaturtles.org

Endorsed by over 100 organizations including: Animal Welfare Institute, USA; Center for Biological Diversity, USA; Centro Eoceanos, Chile; Conservation International, USA; Defenders of Wildlife, USA; Environmental Defense, USA; Friends of the Earth, USA; Greenpeace, Chile; Grupo de los Cien, Mexico; International Fund for Animal Welfare, Mexico; International Wildlife Coalition, Canada; The Leatherback Trust, USA; Oceana, USA; National Coalition for Marine Conservation, USA; Natural Resources Defense Council, USA; Pacific Concerns Resource Center, Fiji; PRETOMA, Costa Rica; Recreational Fishing Alliance, USA; Swiss Coalition for the Protection of Whales, Switzerland; The Marine Turtle Preservation Group, India; Turtle Island Restoration Network, USA; Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, United Kingdom; WILD Coast, USA; Wildlife Conservation Society, USA; WildAid, USA.

Fill out and mail or fax to: Sea Turtle Restoration Project, P.O. Box 400, Forest Knolls, CA 94933 Fax (415) 488-0372. We will forward your message to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and President Bush.

Secretary General Kofi Annan
United Nations

Previously, the UN took a position of global leadership and banned high seas driftnet fishing. I urge you now to support a United Nations' moratorium on pelagic longline and gillnet fishing in the Pacific that harm or kill endangered sea turtles and other species.

NAME _____
ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP _____
EMAIL (OPTIONAL) _____

President George W. Bush
The White House

I urge you to champion efforts in the US and internationally to reform unsustainable industrial fisheries and to support a UN moratorium on longlining and gillnetting in the Pacific. If the fishing activities of other nations are undermining the effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act, use the Pelly Amendment to impose meaningful trade sanctions.

NAME _____
ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP _____
EMAIL (OPTIONAL) _____

Todd Steiner
Director, Sea Turtle Restoration Project
PO Box 400, Forest Knolls, CA 94933 Fax (415) 488-0372

Thank you for championing the effort to protect leatherbacks and reform fisheries. I want to help in this effort.
 I have signed the coupons.
 I am enclosing my tax-deductible contribution to this campaign:
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$500 or _____

NAME _____
ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP _____
EMAIL _____