

Jennifer Schultz - NOAA Federal

From: Jennifer Schultz - NOAA Federal
Sent: Monday, February 10, 2020 11:11 AM
To: CHAMBERS, ANGY L GS-12 USSF SPOC 45 CES/CEIE
Subject: Re: FW: Green sea turtle critical habitat

Hi Angy,

Thank you for contacting me. Yes, we are working on critical habitat for green turtles. NMFS is focusing on in-water designations. The proposed designation will likely be similar to the loggerhead critical habitat designation, which had marine areas off nesting beaches and migratory corridors. However, for the green turtle proposed designation, we are also looking at foraging areas, which may include the areas you manage (specifically the Trident Basin).

We are not quite ready to review INRMPs because we are still working on our biological report, which is the first step in our designation proposal process. However, I can provide some information that may help you to justify additional research on green turtles in this area. I think that one of the most confusing parts of our 4(a)(3) analyses is that we have to demonstrate that the area to be exempted is subject to an INRMP that provides a benefit to the species. Here is the wording from the ESA:

“The Secretary shall not designate as critical habitat any lands or other geographical areas owned or controlled by the Department of Defense, or designated for its use, that are subject to an integrated natural resources management plan prepared under section 101 of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a), if the Secretary determines in writing that such plan provides a benefit to the species for which critical habitat is proposed for designation.”

I think that the confusion arises in that some INRMPs mention the species (e.g., green turtle) but then fail to explain how the plan provides a benefit to the species. Another issue that we have with sea turtles is that some plans provide benefits for turtles on land (which allows FWS to exempt those nesting beaches), but we (NMFS) only consider marine areas for our critical habitat designations. So, we are looking for INRMPs to provide benefits to in-water turtles.

Your email is spot-on. If you can show how the Air Force is providing benefits to in-water turtles, for example by research that promotes the conservation of green turtles (tracking and monitoring are good examples), then we can include that in our justification for an exemption from proposed critical habitat designation.

Thank you again for your email, and please let me know if I can be of help in any way. We do not have a timeline yet for the proposal of our green turtle critical habitat designation, but I will be in touch with you and other DoD colleagues as soon as we complete our biological report.

Thanks,

Jenny

Jennifer Schultz, Ph.D.
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On Fri, Feb 7, 2020 at 1:37 PM CHAMBERS, ANGY L GS-12 USSF SPOC 45 CES/CEIE
<angy.chambers@us.af.mil> wrote:

Hi Jennifer. I am emailing to find out what the status is of the in-water critical habitat designation for green sea turtles. I am the wildlife manager for Cape Canaveral Air Force Station and Patrick Air Force Base. I am most interested in any proposal to designate in water habitat in the Port Canaveral area, specifically the Trident Basin where we have a population of juvenile green sea turtles. The Air Force currently has a contract with University of Central Florida (via USFWS) to do biannual monitoring of this population. They are pretty much doing the bare minimal because we do not have a Biological Opinion that requires us to do any monitoring. I would like to try and increase funding for this project this year so that UCF can do additional activities (such as tracking) but I need strong justification. If NMFS were considering designating critical habitat in the Trident, that would help me justify the increase in funding request. Any insight you could provide on the status of critical habitat designation would be very appreciated. Thanks. v/r

-----Original Message-----

From: Lauritsen, AnnMarie <annmarie_lauritsen@fws.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 7, 2020 12:59 PM
To: CHAMBERS, ANGY L GS-12 USSF SPOC 45 CES/CEIE <angy.chambers@us.af.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Green sea turtle critical habitat

Hi Angy,

I started working again on the nesting beach part of the green turtle critical habitat. The NMFS POC for the inwater part is Jenny Schultz, 301-427-8443, jennifer.schultz@noaa.gov.

Also, will you send me the latest INRMP for the 45th SW , just the sea turtle parts?

Thanks!

Ann Marie Lauritsen
Southeast Sea Turtle Coordinator
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From: CHAMBERS, ANGY L GS-12 USSF SPOC 45 CES/CEIE <angy.chambers@us.af.mil>

Sent: Friday, February 7, 2020 10:36 AM

To: Lauritsen, AnnMarie

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Green sea turtle critical habitat

Ann Marie - Do you have any insider knowledge on what's going on with in-water green sea turtle critical habitat listing or can you direct me to somebody in NMFS that can update me?

I am trying to increase funding for our juvenile green sea turtle study in Trident Basin and thought I could use potential critical habitat listing as one of the justifications.

Angy L. Chambers

Wildlife Management

45 CES/CEIE-Cape

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