

## Northeast Region Sea Turtle Disentanglement Network

### Instructions for Completing the Sea Turtle Entanglement Report Form

**FIELD #:** Indicate the field number given to the animal / event by the response organization. This number should be a unique identifier. It is possible for more than one agency to respond to an individual animal, in which case a single event may have more than one field number.

**Shaded area is for NOAA Fisheries Service (NMFS) use only**

**EVENT CONFIRMATION:** NMFS will determine if an event was confirmed, probable, or not confirmed and describe how that decision was made. *Please leave this section blank.*

**INITIAL OBSERVATION:** The initial observation is the first time the entangled turtle was sighted. The observer is the individual who encountered the entangled turtle first-hand and reported it to the Sea Turtle Disentanglement Network (STDN) or NMFS either directly or through another individual or agency.

- **Observer name and phone number:** Record the full name and contact phone number for the initial observer. If the report was relayed to the STDN by an intermediate source, do not put the intermediate source as the initial observer.
- **Observer affiliation:** Record the affiliation, if applicable, for the initial observer. If no affiliation, please indicate a general description of the initial observer (e.g., recreational boater, commercial fisherman, etc.).
- **Observation date and time:** Record the full date and time of the initial observation, i.e., the time the animal was actually sighted. This is *not* the date and time of the report, i.e., when the initial observer contacted the STDN or NMFS.
- **Turtle condition:** Check the box for the condition code that best describes the turtle during the initial observation. If the turtle was dead and seemed intermediate between two codes, choose the most appropriate option. Fresh dead turtles should have no foul smell; moderately decomposed turtles have a foul smell, but skin and scutes are intact or only beginning to peel, internal organs are still distinguishable; severely decomposed turtles have scutes lifting or gone and skin beginning to peel or liquefy, with hard to distinguish internal organs; dried carcasses are leathery, with internal organs completely decomposed. If uncertain about the condition check unknown and provide a description of the turtle's condition in Event Summary and Additional Remarks (herein Additional Remarks) on back.

**EXAMINATION / RESPONSE:** The responder is the person who examined, handled, disentangled and/or collected data on the turtle in the field or attempted to do so.

- **Responder name and phone number:** Record the full name and contact phone number for the responder. The responder may be the initial observer if the initial observer also disentangled the turtle, either on their own or with direction from the STDN.
- **Responder affiliation:** Record the affiliation of the responder.
- **Response date and time responder arrived on scene:** Please record the full date and time when the response team arrived on scene, i.e., the disentanglement or examination was initiated.
- **Turtle condition:** Check the box for the condition code that best describes the turtle when the response team arrived on scene. See Turtle Condition above for more details.

#### **PHOTO DOCUMENTATION:**

- **Photos taken:** Please indicate if photos were taken. All photos and video should be sent to NMFS at the same time as submission of the STERF.
- **Video taken:** Please indicate if video was taken. Documentation of turtle behavior through video is invaluable in post interaction mortality determination.
- **Documentation:** The following list indicates the photos that should be taken during each entanglement event. Please check the appropriate boxes to indicate that these photos were taken.
  - The sea turtle in the entangling gear, showing overall gear configuration and confirming species;
  - Close-ups of the entanglement site(s), showing any injuries and detailed gear configuration; and
  - Any identifiable features of the gear, e.g., buoy color, tags and/or numbers.

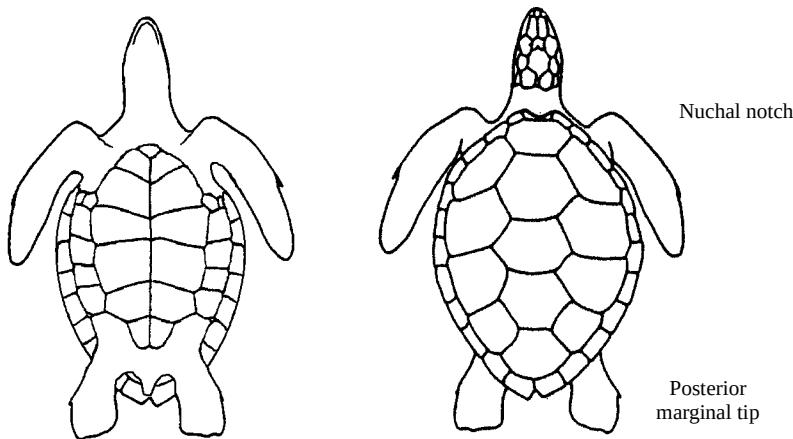
**LOCATION:** Fill in all fields in this section.

- **State:** Provide the two letter abbreviation for the state where the entanglement occurred. If the entanglement occurred in the EEZ, outside the three-mile boundary of state waters, indicate the closest state to the entanglement location.
- **County:** Indicate the county where the entanglement occurred. If the entanglement occurred in the EEZ, indicate EEZ waters.

- **Nearest port / town:** Indicate the nearest port or town.
- **Locality details:** Include a general description of the event location, including proximity to land. Please only reference places that can be readily found on maps; do not use “local” names.
- **Stranded ashore:** Please check “yes” if the animal stranded on land naturally. Please check “no” if the animal was in the water and was not brought to shore or if the animal was collected from the water and brought to a rehab or necropsy facility. If this was the case, make sure you indicate that the animal was collected for treatment or necropsy under Disentanglement Outcome or Carcass Disposition.
- **Latitude and longitude:** Make every effort to collect the GPS location for all entanglement events. Provide latitude / longitude in decimal degrees (e.g., 42.5321°N). If you are given Loran units by the initial observer, please convert it to latitude / longitude, but also provide the original Loran numbers.

#### **TURTLE DATA:**

- **Species or description:** Record the turtle species only if *definitively* identified by a trained responder or photo documentation. If species is unknown or not confirmed by one of the two above methods, please provide a description of the turtle (including features such as coloration and number of vertebral and/or costal scutes). Every effort should be made to take photos of the turtle for species verification. Photos of the carapace and head are most useful. If you are unsure about the species ID, take several photos from different angles. Do not guess. Please contact NMFS if you need sea turtle identification materials.
- **Straight carapace length:** Straight carapace length is measured using calipers from the nuchal notch to the posterior marginal tip (see drawing below). Indicate whether measurement is in inches or centimeters and whether it is actual or estimated. Please indicate that length is an estimate if the reporting party provides a total length rather than a carapace length.



- **Curved carapace length:** Curved carapace length is measured using a soft tape measure from the nuchal notch to the posterior tip, following the curvature of the dorsal centerline.
- **Weight:** Indicate the turtle’s weight, as well as whether weight is in kilograms or pounds and whether it is actual or estimated. Please leave blank if unsure.
- **Sex:** Check whether the turtle was male or female; check unknown if you are unsure. Immature sea turtles cannot be sexed externally, so please check unknown if dealing with a live immature turtle. Adult male turtles have a tail that extends well beyond the posterior tip of the carapace. Check whether the tail extends beyond the carapace. If you document a turtle with a long tail, please measure the length of the tail beyond the carapace and record the measurement. Please be aware that juvenile males may not show this characteristic; therefore, if unsure about the age class of the animal, do not use tail length for sex determination. Indicate how sex was determined; if sex was marked unknown, check N/A in this field.

**GEAR TYPE:** Please indicate the primary entangling gear by putting a “P” in the space next to the appropriate gear type. Primary entangling gear is that which was *in direct contact with* the turtle. There can be more than one set and/or type of primary gear. Please indicate any secondary gear by putting an “S” in the space next to the appropriate gear type. Secondary gear is any gear that was present, but *not* in direct contact with the turtle. For example, if a turtle was entangled in vertical line, which itself was tangled with monofilament, you would put a “P” next to Vertical Line with Surface Buoy and an “S” next to Line Only and check Monofilament.

- **Vertical Line with Surface Buoy:** Indicate this gear type if the entangling gear included line and a surface buoy. Check whether or not the buoy and line were attached to gear on the bottom, meaning that the line was attached to something heavy below the surface. If yes, indicate whether it was weighted by a pot, net, other item (please

describe), or it is unknown. Indicate the length of line between the turtle (i.e., the entanglement site) and the surface buoy, as well as whether this length is in centimeters or inches and whether it is actual or estimated.

- **Line Only (no buoy):** Indicate this option if the entangling gear was only an expanse of line with no buoys attached. Check whether the line was monofilament, multifilament (such as nylon or polypropylene rope), or unknown. Check whether there was a hook(s) associated with the entangling line and, if so, if and where it was attached to the turtle. As above, check whether or not the buoy and line were attached to gear on the bottom, meaning that the line was attached to something heavy below the surface. If yes, indicate whether it was weighted by a pot, net, other item (please describe), or it is unknown.
- **Net:** Indicate this option if the entangling gear was netting or mesh. Check whether the net was monofilament (e.g., gillnet) or multifilament (e.g., nylon or poly mesh as in a trawl net). *NOTE: If turtle was entangled in the vertical line of a gill net, you should check Vertical Line with Surface Buoy and then indicate that the gear was weighted with a net.*
- **Fish Trap (pound net / weir):** Indicate this gear type if the turtle was caught in any part of a fish trap. Check whether the turtle was free-swimming in the trap, entangled in the trap leader, entangled in the trap, or other. If other, please describe nature of the interaction in Additional Remarks.
- **Other:** Indicate this option if the entangling gear did not fit into any of the above categories. Describe the gear as much as possible; continue in Additional Remarks, if necessary.

**GEAR DETAILS:** Record any of the applicable gear details.

- **Net**
  - o Estimated stretched mesh size: Record the length between opposite corners / knots of the mesh when pulled taut, as well as whether this measurement is in centimeters or inches.
  - o ID number(s): Document any net numbers that were present.
- **Pot(s)**
  - o Number: Provide the number of pots involved with the entanglement, with as specific information as possible. If there was a pot trawl, but the exact number of pots is unknown, write ">1" or "trawl".
  - o ID Number(s): Document any pot numbers that were present.
- **Buoy(s)**
  - o Number: Record the number of buoys associated with the entanglement.
  - o Space is available to provide addition buoy information for up to three buoys. Provide any further information in Additional Remarks.
    - Type: Please specify the buoy shape: Bullet, Acorn, Round, Polyball, Other. Also note whether it is a single or double buoy (Double Bullet, Double Acorn, or Bullet/Acorn) and whether there is a stick, flag, and/or radar reflector present on the buoy(s).
    - Color/Pattern: Please provide an overall description of the buoy coloration / pattern, in particular noting the color on the bottom (side attached to the vertical line) of the buoy.
    - ID Number(s) / Letter(s): Please record the ID number(s) / letter(s) on the buoy.
- **Line(s)**
  - o Number: Provide the number of different lines involved in the entanglement.
  - o Space is available to provide the line color for up to three lines. Provide any further information in Additional Remarks.
- **Biofouling present on gear:** Check whether there was biofouling (e.g., sponges, tunicates, bivalves, algae, etc.) visible on the entangling gear. If so, estimate the percentage of the visible gear that was covered by biofouling. Please describe the type of biofouling present in Additional Remarks.
- **Gear retrieved:** Check if all, some, or none of the gear was collected. If gear was collected, indicate its disposition, i.e., where the gear is located at the time this form is submitted to NMFS. If the location of the gear changes after the form is submitted, please contact NMFS with the updated gear location or update this information on the STERF and resubmit.
  - o Gear collected from endangered or threatened sea turtles requires a Chain of Custody form.
  - o Every effort should be made to send gear to NMFS *immediately* with the chain-of-custody form (address below).

**Unless otherwise authorized, gear should only be collected if it is not actively fishing (i.e., only collect derelict, incomplete or displaced gear). Do not create derelict gear by collecting surface buoys, thereby leaving bottom gear unmarked.**

**DISENTANGLEMENT OUTCOME:** This section pertains to LIVE animals only; if the event involved a dead sea turtle, leave this section blank and go to Carcass Disposition. Please check ONE of the listed options to describe the disposition of the live animal at the time of this report being submitted to NMFS. If the turtle was disentangled by the reporting party and it is not clear whether it was completely freed of gear, check unknown and describe in Additional Remarks. If the turtle

was collected for treatment, please provide the name of the rehabilitation facility. If the turtle was relocated, please provide the latitude and longitude and/or locality details of the release site.

**CARCASS DISPOSITION:** This section pertains to DEAD animals only; if the event involves a live sea turtle, leave this section blank and go to Disentanglement Outcome. Please choose one *or more* of the listed options to describe the disposition of the carcass and/or samples at the time of this report being submitted to NMFS. In the marine environment, biopsy samples are only authorized to be collected from dead turtles.

**TAG / MARK DATA:** Space is provided for three tags / marks; if necessary continue in Additional Remarks.

- **Checked for flipper tags:** Please indicate whether or not all four flippers of the turtle were examined for the presence of flipper tags.
- **Scanned for PIT tags:** Please indicate whether or not the turtle was scanned, using a PIT tag scanner, for the presence of PIT tags.
- **Tag / mark type:** In this column, please indicate the type of any tags or marks that were either applied during response or discovered upon examination. Examples include, but are not limited to, inconel tag, PIT tag, paint mark, living tag, or satellite tag.
- **Numbers:** In this column, please indicate any numbers associated with tags or marks that were either applied during response or discovered upon examination.
- **Location on animal:** Use this column to indicate the location on the animal of tags or marks that were either applied during response or discovered upon examination.
- **Applied or Present:** Check whether the tag or mark referred to in that row was applied during response or present at the time of examination.

#### **ENTANGLEMENT / WOUND DESCRIPTION:**

Use the table to describe the entanglement configuration and any wounds associated with the entanglement site.

- **Body area involved:** In this column, please check the box(es) corresponding to the areas of the body directly involved with the entanglement.
- For each body area, there are eight boxes (see below) that may be checked to describe the nature of injury at the entanglement site. In addition, there is space for a description of the entanglement configuration and wounds. Use this space to describe the exact location of wraps in that body area, the number of wraps, whether they were complete or partial circumference, whether they were tight (i.e., no space between tissue and gear) or loose (some space between tissue and gear), and any other details that describe the entanglement. Continue in Additional Remarks if necessary.
  - **Movement impaired:** movement in this body area is abnormal.
  - **Indentation:** a depression in the tissue at the entanglement site; skin was not missing or broken.
  - **Skin abraded:** wearing away / erosion of the upper layer of skin at the entanglement site as a result of friction from the gear; an abrasion involves only the skin and not the underlying tissue.
  - **Muscle exposed:** muscle is visible at the entanglement site.
  - **Bone exposed:** bone is visible at the entanglement site.
  - **Swelling:** tissue swollen at the entanglement site.
  - **Discoloration:** skin is discolored pale, white, brown, red, green, or anything beyond normal limits.
  - **Tissue necrotic / sloughing:** tissue necrotic, i.e. skin and underlying tissue discolored (pale, white, brown, red, or green) and easily falling apart or splitting.

#### **BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATIONS**

- **Response to Approach and Handling:** Choose one of the four options to best describe the turtle's behavior during approach and disentanglement. If behavior is unknown, please check Could not evaluate.
- **Response Upon Release:**
  - Choose one of the four options in the first row to best describe the turtle's behavior once the gear was removed. If behavior is unknown, please check Could not evaluate.
  - Choose one of the two options in the second row to best describe how soon the turtle swam away after disentanglement.
- **Describe Behavior:** Use this space to elaborate on behavior during disentanglement or upon release. Use the Additional Remarks section if need be.

**EVENT SUMMARY AND ADDITIONAL REMARKS:** *Do not leave this section blank!* Please provide a summary of the disentanglement event, including progression of events, overall behavior of the animal and amount of time spent on scene. Detail any other unusual circumstances, entanglement configuration, behavior, gear description, tag information or wounds not yet accounted for. Include any other information or remarks on the case.

**NMFS CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Electronic submission of photos, video and STERFs (preferred means of submission):**

[Kate.Sampson@noaa.gov](mailto:Kate.Sampson@noaa.gov)

**Mailing address:**

NOAA Fisheries Service, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Protected Resources Division  
55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930  
Fax: 978-281-9394

**Photos, video, STERFs, and/or biopsy samples:** Attn: Kate Sampson, Sea Turtle Disentanglement Coordinator

**Gear with chain of custody forms:** Attn: David Morin, Atlantic Entanglement Response Program

**Please address any questions to:**

Ph: 978-282-8470, [Kate.Sampson@noaa.gov](mailto:Kate.Sampson@noaa.gov)

The collection of information on sea turtle entanglement is necessary to ensure sea turtles are being conserved and protected, as mandated by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Your voluntary collection and submission of this information will help achieve this objective. The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average one hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. Personal identifiers and any commercial information will be kept confidential to the extent permitted under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552), the Department of Commerce FOIA regulations (15 CFR Part 4, Subpart A), the Trade Secrets Act (18 U.S.C. 1905), and NOAA Administrative Order 216-100. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to (NMFS, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Protected Resources Division, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930)

OMB Control No: 0648-0496; Exp Date: xx/xx/yyyy