

Press Releases: Sea Turtle Conservation and Shrimp Imports to the United States

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

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On May 1, 2017, the Department of State certified 39 nations and one economy, and granted determinations for seven fisheries, as having adequate measures in place to protect sea turtles during the course of commercial shrimp fishing, which permits those countries to export wild-caught shrimp to the United States under Section 609 of Public Law 101-162 (“Section 609”).

Section 609 prohibits the importation of wild-caught shrimp and products from shrimp harvested in ways that may adversely affect sea turtles unless the Department of State certifies to Congress that the government of the harvesting nation or economy has adopted a regulatory program comparable to that of the United States to reduce the incidental taking of sea turtles in its shrimp trawl fisheries, such as through the use of turtle excluder devices (“TEDs”) or that the particular fishing environment of the harvesting nation or economy does not threaten sea turtles. The Department makes certifications annually and bases them in part on the results of overseas verification visits by a team composed of State Department and National Marine Fisheries Service representatives. For more information on the Certification to Congress please see the Federal Register Notice published on May 5, 2017, at 82 FR 21295:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/05/05/2017-09164/annual-certification-of-shrimp-harvesting-nations>.

Six of the world’s seven species of marine turtles are listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The seventh species is not found in U.S. waters. Implementation of Section 609 provides considerable benefits to sea turtles species. If properly designed, built, installed, used, and maintained, TEDs allow 97 percent of sea turtles to escape the shrimp net without appreciable loss of shrimp. The United States government is currently providing technology and capacity-building assistance to other nations in the hope they can contribute to the recovery of sea turtle species and be certified under Section 609, and is encouraging enactment by other countries of similar legislation to prevent the importation of shrimp

harvested in a manner harmful to protected sea turtles. For more information on United States government sea turtle conservation efforts, please go to <https://www.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/fish/seaturtles/index.htm> or <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/turtles/>.

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