



Southern Shrimp Alliance, Inc

P.O. Box 1577
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688
Ph. 727.934.5090
Fx. 727.934.5362
john@shrimpalliance.com

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Congressman Solomon Ortiz (D-TX) and Congressman Walter Jones (R-NC) recently met with NOAA officials to press NOAA to defer consideration of the substantive aspects of the Agency's Proposed Rule to substantially alter the current status and treatment of loggerhead sea turtles under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) until after ongoing aerial survey research and data can be incorporated into a much-needed revision of the loggerhead population assessment. The Congressmen kindly invited a representative of SSA to participate in their meeting.

The key substantive elements of the NOAA Proposed Rule are to divide the loggerhead sea turtle species into 9 Distinct Population Segments (DPS) and to up-list 7 of those proposed DPSs from Threatened to Endangered status, including the proposed DPS with which the shrimp industry interacts. If the underlying population assessments and other scientific bases of these proposed changes are not revised as requested by the Congressmen, the new rules are likely to have a substantial adverse regulatory impact on the shrimp fishery and all other US fisheries that interact with loggerhead turtles.

As a follow-up to this important meeting, the Congressmen recently sent [a letter to NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco](#) further pressing their position. SSA expresses its profound appreciation to Congressmen Ortiz and Jones, and their excellent staff, Lucy Ortega and Josh Bowlen, respectively, for their tireless support of SSA's work on behalf of the domestic shrimp industry and especially for their exceptional focus on this complex but crucial sea turtle issue facing our industry.

In addition, please be advised that SSA has engaged expert ESA attorney George Mannina and shrimp/sea turtle expert Dr. Benny Gallaway to work with SSA staff in preparing extensive formal public comments on the Proposed Rule which will be filed with NOAA next week and posted on this website.