





Sea Turtle Handling and Resuscitation Requirements

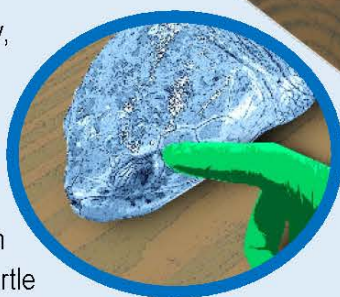
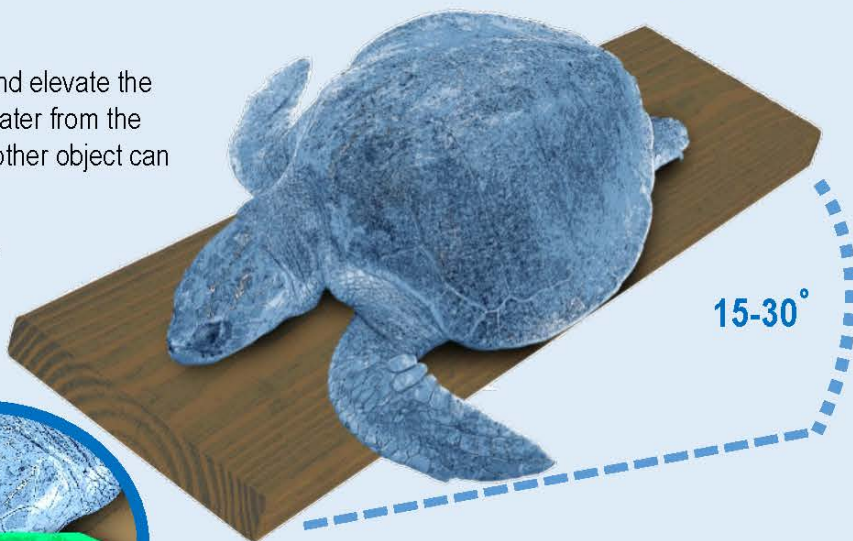
Per federal regulations at 50 CFR 223.206(d)(1):

-  **Any sea turtle taken incidentally during fishing must be handled with care to prevent injury, evaluated to make sure it is active, and safely returned to the water.**
-  **Unresponsive turtles could still be alive and resuscitation must be attempted.**

- Turtles that are unresponsive after capture may survive if allowed to recover.
- Sea turtles should only be considered dead if the muscles are stiff (rigor mortis), their body becomes bloated with gas, or the skin is detaching.

Resuscitation of unresponsive or inactive sea turtles must be attempted using the following procedures:

- 1 Elevate Tail End:** Place the turtle right side up and elevate the hindquarters at least 6" (~15 - 30°) to help drain water from the lungs. A board, tire, boat cushion, coiled rope, or other object can be used for elevation.
- 2 Rock Gently:** Occasionally rock the turtle gently side to side by holding the outer edge of the shell and lifting one side about 3", then alternate to the other side.
- 3 Check Eye Reflex:** Periodically, gently touch the corner of the eye or eyelid to see if the eyelid moves. This reflex will return as the turtle recovers.
- 4 Keep Cool and Moist:** In warm weather (over 75°F), keep the turtle shaded and moist. Place a water-soaked towel over the head, shell, and flippers or regularly wet the turtle with seawater to keep the turtle cool and moist. Never put the turtle into a container with water.
- 5 Release Active Turtle Carefully:** Release active, resuscitated turtles as close to the water as possible. When doing so make sure fishing gear is not in use, the engine is in neutral, and avoid areas where the turtle may be recaptured or injured by other vessels.
- 6 Give Them Time:** Attempt resuscitation for at least 4 hours. If there are no signs of life after 24 hours on deck, or if the muscles are stiff and/or the flesh has begun to rot, consider the turtle dead and return it to the water in the same manner (unless a NMFS observer retains the carcass).



Do not put the turtle on its back or pump the bottom shell (plastron) or try to force water out, as this is dangerous to the turtle.