



# Sea Turtles Program

## NFWF CONTACTS

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## PARTNERS

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

## ABOUT NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 6,000 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of \$8.1 billion.

Learn more at [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org)

## NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Green sea turtle in the Gulf of Mexico

## OVERVIEW

The Sea Turtles program is one of the longest running programs at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), with investments dating back over 30 years to stabilize and increase the recovery trajectories of sea turtle populations in the Western Hemisphere. Several business plans have guided the program over the years, with the most recent focusing on Eastern Pacific leatherback and hawksbill populations and northwestern Atlantic leatherback and loggerhead populations.

The Sea Turtle program will award at least \$500,000 per year in competitive grants for bycatch reduction and nest protection at key geographies to recover four endangered sea turtle populations. The program also commits a subset of resources to support conservation capacity across regional networks for monitoring and coordinated research. Since the inception of the 2019-2029 business plan priorities, NFWF has invested \$3.4 million through the Sea Turtles program.

The Sea Turtles program is supported with major funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and further guidance from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The program has also established partnerships with regional networks such as ICAPO and Laúd OPO to promote coordinated conservation and standardized monitoring across population ranges.

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**FEATURED PROJECTS**

A new NOAA priority in the Sea Turtles program administers funds to organizations that provide sea turtle stranding response and/or rehabilitation in the United States and its territories. As climate change continues to disrupt weather patterns and sea turtle populations increase in number, facilities along the coasts must be properly equipped to respond. Support from these awards will help these first responders and sea turtle hospitals build their capacity to respond to stranded and injured sea turtles and provide rehabilitation care through infrastructure upgrades. Some examples from the 2024 Sea Turtles grant slate are outlined below.

**Improving Recovery of Cold-Stunned Sea Turtles Along Cape Cod (MA) – Massachusetts Audubon Society**

Massachusetts Audubon Society of Wellfleet Bay coordinates the largest annual sea turtle stranding response in the world, occurring on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Over the past five years, they have recovered more than 3,800 stranded sea turtles and coordinated their transportation to rehabilitation facilities in New England. Almost 90 percent of these turtles are critically endangered Kemp’s ridleys, and this annual stranding event has increased substantially in the last 15 years. The funding received through NFWF will allow for additional capacity for both response and volunteer management, accelerating the response times to strandings, and in turn increasing sea turtle survival rates.

**Creating an Emergency Care and Rehabilitation Center for Sea Turtle Strandings on Oahu (HI) – Hawai’i Marine Mammal Alliance**

The majority of annual sea turtle strandings in Hawai’i occur on the island Oahu, but currently the only full-time sea turtle rehabilitation center is on the island of Maui. Nearly all stranded sea turtles requiring rehabilitation are transported from Oahu to Maui via commercial aircraft, which leads to delays in treatment and increased costs. This project will provide funds to transform an existing marine sciences facility on Oahu into a rehabilitation center that can support the treatment of more than 60 sea turtles.



Leatherback turtle hatchling

**2024 GRANTS**

**Assessment of Bycatch Risk for Leatherback Sea Turtles at Foraging Grounds in Colombia**

Grantee: CIMAD  
 Grant Amount:.....\$60,000  
 Matching Funds:.....\$60,000  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$120,000

Enhance conservation efforts in Eastern Pacific Leatherback foraging grounds in the Colombian South Pacific. Project will train fishermen on best practices to minimize injury to captured sea turtles, reduce the likelihood of post-release mortality and promote the implementation of bycatch reduction measures.

**Capacity Building to Expand Sea Turtle Stranding Response and Community Engagement (USVI)**

Grantee: The St. Croix Foundation  
 Grant Amount:.....\$80,000  
 Matching Funds:.....\$47,000  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$127,000

Improve current sea turtle stranding response activities to ensure the activities and strategies in the U.S. Virgin Islands are meeting conservation standards. Project will support a sea turtle stranding coordinator to provide leadership, standardization and growth to current stranding operations.

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### **Creating an Emergency Care and Rehabilitation Center for Sea Turtle Strandings on Oahu (HI)**

Grantee: Hawai'i Marine Mammal Alliance  
 Grant Amount:..... \$50,000  
 Matching Funds:..... \$123,200  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$173,200  
 Establish sea turtle care and rehabilitation capacity on Oahu, where the bulk of sea turtle strandings in Hawai'i occur. Project will repurpose and augment an existing marine science facility into a sea turtle rehabilitation center.

### **Engaging Fishing Communities to Reduce Sea Turtle Bycatch and Retention in Peru**

Grantee: Areas Costeras y Recursos Marinos  
 Grant Amount:..... \$50,000  
 Matching Funds:..... \$78,200  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$128,200  
 Build upon previous relationships with fishermen in Peru to reduce sea turtle bycatch and retention. Project will explore LED lights to track bycatch rates and implement community engagement activities to reduce retention.

### **Establish Lighting Reduction Strategies for Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches in Costa Rica**

Grantee: The Leatherback Trust  
 Grant Amount:..... \$170,000  
 Matching Funds:..... \$170,000  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$340,000  
 Increase quality of nesting beaches of leatherback and hawksbill sea turtles in the Eastern Pacific. Project will increase hatchling and nest protection from predation and poaching and establish strategies to reduce impacts from beachfront lighting.

### **Improve Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Water Quality by Adding Life Support Systems (NC)**

Grantee: Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center  
 Grant Amount:..... \$50,000  
 Matching Funds:..... \$51,000  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$101,000  
 Improve water quality for newly admitted sea turtles in rehabilitation by changing from dump-and-fill pools to filtered pools with life support systems. Project will create several independently filtered systems to increase the quality of care of sea turtle patients.

### **Improving Recovery of Cold-Stunned Sea Turtles Along Cape Cod (MA)**

Grantee: Massachusetts Audubon Society  
 Grant Amount:..... \$69,500  
 Matching Funds:..... \$80,900  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$150,400  
 Improve response and recovery time for cold-stunned sea

turtles during annual stranding events on Cape Cod. Project will increase vehicle, staff, and volunteer management capacity to increase efficiencies in sea turtle recovery, stabilization and transport to rehabilitation facilities, improving survival rates.

### **Increasing Rehabilitation Capacity for Cape Code Cold-Stunned Sea Turtles (MA)**

Grantee: National Marine Life Center  
 Grant Amount:..... \$59,500  
 Matching Funds:..... \$2,000  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$61,500  
 Increase rehabilitation capacity for endangered and threatened cold-stunned turtles along the shores of Cape Cod Bay. Project will result in the ability to provide and maintain appropriate water quality for longer-term sea turtle rehabilitation.

### **Increasing Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Infrastructure in California**

Grantee: Aquarium of the Pacific  
 Grant Amount:..... \$35,000  
 Matching Funds:..... \$35,000  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$70,000  
 Purchase and construct a sea turtle rehabilitation pool at the Aquarium of the Pacific. Project will increase the infrastructure and capacity to respond to stranded, sick or injured sea turtles in California for return to the wild.

### **Replacing Capacity for Treatment of Sea Turtles at Brevard Zoo's Sea Turtle Healing Center (FL)**

Grantee: East Coast Zoological Society of Florida at Brevard Zoo  
 Grant Amount:..... \$54,400  
 Matching Funds:..... \$120,000  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$174,400  
 Maintain capacity for treatment of fibropapillomatosis, a disease that can cause tumors on sea turtles that prevent movement and eating. Project will replace failing veterinary equipment at one of the primary facilities for this treatment.

### **Training Fishing Fleets and Building Regional Capacity to Save Eastern Pacific Leatherbacks in Peru**

Grantee: Pro Delphinus  
 Grant Amount:..... \$220,000  
 Matching Funds:..... \$200,000  
 Total Project Amount:..... \$420,000  
 Train and certify fishers in Peru's longline fleet in turtle-safe handling and bycatch reporting while implementing a regional interchange among fishers and building regional capacity through responsible fisheries training. Project will increase turtle survival from bycatch in Peru fisheries and foster regional stakeholder awareness and capacity for sea turtle conservation.