



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

“... conserving our natural resources and your right to enjoy them.”



Resolution No. 04, 2015

SUBJECT: COMMERCIAL HARVEST OF DIAMONDBACK TERRAPINS

WHEREAS, the Diamondback terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin*) is native to coastal environments of the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico from Massachusetts to Texas; and

WHEREAS, one subspecies, *M. terrapin pileata*, is native to the Louisiana coast; and

WHEREAS, Diamondback terrapins play an important role in maintaining functional coastal saltwater marsh ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, habitat destruction poses a major threat to Diamondback terrapin populations; and

WHEREAS, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Texas, 4 of 5 states with the highest rates of wetland loss, comprise 67% of the terrapin range; and

WHEREAS, the insatiable demand for turtles as food, medicine or pets in China has decimated wild turtle populations throughout Asia, thereby resulting in dramatically increased U.S. exports to that region; and

WHEREAS, the USFWS Law Enforcement Management Information System database, which tracks all US animal and animal part exports, shows a significantly increasing trend of Diamondback terrapin exports from 833 in 2003, to 4,401 in 2010, 3,734 in 2011, 4003 in 2012, 2,596 in 2013, and 16,226 in 2014; and

WHEREAS, a local Diamondback terrapin population can become vulnerable from the loss of just a few adults due to delayed sexual maturity, limited annual reproductive output and high juvenile and egg mortality; and

WHEREAS, this species was recently included in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to ensure that its survival in the wild will not be jeopardized by exportation; and

WHEREAS, in neighboring Texas, Diamondback terrapins are listed as a protected species and state regulations have prohibited all commercial trade there since 2007, and

WHEREAS, Louisiana currently allows commercial harvest of Diamondback terrapins and has imposed seasons and size limits, but is the only remaining Gulf coast state to sanction a wild commercial harvest, and the pressure may be shifting to populations in Louisiana.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation respectfully requests the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to monitor and report the commercial harvest of Diamondback terrapins in Louisiana and to assess the impact of increasing exports of the turtle on the sustainability of its wild population.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation supports additional rules or restrictions on commercial harvest of Diamondback terrapins in Louisiana as necessary to maintain a sustainable wild population.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in Convention Assembled, August 22, 2015 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.