



*DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
(PEIS) FOR SURVEYING AND MAPPING PROJECTS IN U.S.
WATERS FOR COASTAL AND MARINE DATA ACQUISITION*

SEA TURTLES



- There are six species of sea turtles present throughout U.S. coastal and marine waters: loggerhead, green, hawksbill, Kemp's ridley, olive ridley, and leatherback.
- All sea turtles in U.S. waters are protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Draft PEIS considers potential impacts to sea turtles, their prey, and their habitat including areas designated as critical habitat under the ESA.

Sea turtles are air-breathing reptiles that are primarily aquatic and come ashore only to lay eggs. Hatchlings immediately enter the sea and migrate to the open ocean with most returning to coastal zones later in life.



Green Sea Turtle Hatchlings



Hawksbill Sea Turtle

Sea turtles are migratory and occur in all regions identified in the Draft PEIS, although they have a limited range in the Alaska Region where they are only rarely sighted. The Pacific Islands Region contains the greatest number of sea turtle species, while the Greater Atlantic and Southeast Regions contain the most designated critical habitat areas.

Environmental Consequences from NOS Activities

NOS activities that could impact sea turtles

- Vessel presence and movement
- Vessel wakes
- Underwater activities
- Onshore activities

The sound produced by active underwater acoustic sources would be at frequencies well above sea turtle hearing range; therefore, it would be unlikely to cause injury, hearing threshold shifts, auditory masking, or behavioral changes. The overall impact of the Proposed Action on sea turtles and their habitat, including designated critical habitat, would be **adverse, minor, and insignificant**.