Everglades Coalition Resolution to urge the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to Protect Imperiled Diamondback Terrapins from Drowning in Blue Crab Pots

Whereas, the diamondback terrapin is the only entirely estuarine turtle in the world and considered a keystone species in estuaries across the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States;

Whereas, three of the diamondback terrapin’s seven subspecies live exclusively in Florida and are found in the Greater Everglades Ecosystem;

Whereas, the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species lists the diamondback terrapin as vulnerable to extinction because of population declines caused by habitat loss, commercial exploitation, road mortality, sea level rise, and other threats;

Whereas, scientific experts in the Diamondback Terrapin Working Group agree that accidental drowning in crab pots is the greatest threat to the diamondback terrapin’s future existence;

Whereas, diamondback terrapin populations are accidentally drowning in blue crab pots across the species’ range, including in Florida;

Whereas, scientists have developed and extensively studied bycatch reduction devices (also known as BRDs) that prevent most terrapins from entering and drowning in crab pots while having minimal or no effect on crab haul;

Whereas, bycatch reduction devices have been studied in Florida waters and proven effective at protecting the majority of adult terrapins from drowning in crab pots;

Whereas, requiring bycatch reduction devices in recreational and commercial crab pots would significantly reduce the risk of diamondback terrapin mortality in crab pots and meaningfully contribute to the species’ overall conservation; and

Whereas, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is undertaking a diamondback terrapin biological assessment in three locations with known terrapin populations to estimate population sizes, sex ratios, and age distributions; genetic analysis; and literature review;
Now, therefore, be it resolved that:

The Everglades Coalition strongly urges the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation to continue analyzing the diamondback terrapin’s status and threats and consider adopting regulations requiring bycatch reduction devices on all recreational and commercial crab pots in state waters.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 17th day of July, 2020.

Mark Perry
Co-Chair

Marisa Carrozzo
Co-Chair