

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 2560

AN ACT

To require the Secretary of Commerce to establish the Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance Grant Program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Sea Turtle Rescue As-
3 sistance and Rehabilitation Act of 2023”.

4 **SEC. 2. SEA TURTLE RESCUE ASSISTANCE AND REHABILI-**
5 **TATION GRANT PROGRAM.**

6 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Secretary shall establish
7 a grant program, to be known as the “Sea Turtle Rescue
8 Assistance and Rehabilitation Grant Program”, to encour-
9 age and facilitate coordinated rapid response and rescue
10 by awarding grants for the purposes described in sub-
11 section (c).

12 (b) **DESIGNATION OF STRANDING AND REHABILITA-**
13 **TION REGIONS.**—The Secretary shall designate geographic
14 regions of the United States as stranding and rehabilita-
15 tion regions for the purposes of carrying out this section.

16 (c) **PURPOSES.**—The purposes of the Program are to
17 provide for—

18 (1) the recovery, short- or long-term care,
19 transportation, and treatment of stranded marine
20 turtles;

21 (2) the release of rescued and recovered marine
22 turtles;

23 (3) the collection of data and samples from
24 stranded marine turtles for scientific research re-
25 lated to marine turtle health; and

1 (4) facility operation costs that are directly re-
2 lated to activities described in paragraphs (1), (2),
3 and (3).

4 (d) **EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.**—The
5 Secretary shall ensure, to the extent practicable, that
6 funds awarded under this section are distributed equitably
7 among stranding and rehabilitation regions, taking into
8 account—

9 (1) the number of stranding and rehabilitation
10 events that occurred in each stranding and rehabili-
11 tation region in the preceding 5 years; and

12 (2) the conservation priorities and recovery
13 needs of species of marine turtles that are threat-
14 ened or endangered under the Endangered Species
15 Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

16 (e) **APPLICATION.**—An applicant for a grant under
17 this section shall submit an application in such form and
18 manner as the Secretary shall prescribe.

19 (f) **GRANT CRITERIA.**—

20 (1) **DEVELOPMENT OF CRITERIA.**—The Sec-
21 retary shall, in consultation with the Director of the
22 United States Fish and Wildlife Service, establish by
23 regulation appropriate criteria for awarding grants
24 under this section.

1 (2) **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT.**—As part of
2 the process for developing and finalizing criteria
3 under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall, in con-
4 sultation with the Director of the United States Fish
5 and Wildlife Service, provide opportunities for en-
6 gagement with representatives from stranding and
7 rehabilitation regions and representatives of State
8 governments and public and private organizations
9 with an established record in coordination, rescue,
10 rehabilitation, and release, as well as related sci-
11 entific research, marine conservation, and forensic
12 science, with respect to stranded marine turtles.

13 (3) **REQUIRED CRITERIA.**—The criteria devel-
14 oped under paragraph (1) shall prioritize applicants
15 with an established record of coordination, rescuing,
16 rehabilitation, scientific research, and forensic
17 science with respect to stranded and rehabilitated
18 marine turtles or conducting scientific research and
19 forensic science on stranded and rehabilitated ma-
20 rine turtles.

21 (g) **LIMITATIONS.**—

22 (1) **MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF GRANT.**—No grant
23 awarded under this section may exceed \$150,000 in
24 any 12-month period.

1 (2) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—The non-Fed-
2 eral share of the costs of an activity conducted with
3 a grant awarded under the Program shall be not less
4 than 50 percent of such costs, including in-kind
5 services and the use of property.

6 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 (1) MARINE TURTLE.—The term “marine tur-
8 tle” means any member of the family Cheloniidae or
9 Dermochelyidae.

10 (2) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means
11 the Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance and Rehabilitation
12 Grant Program established under subsection (a).

13 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
14 the Secretary of Commerce.

15 (4) STRANDING.—The term “stranding” means
16 an event in which—

17 (A) a marine turtle is dead and is—

18 (i) on a beach or shore of the United
19 States; or

20 (ii) in waters under the jurisdiction of
21 the United States (including any navigable
22 waters); or

23 (B) a marine turtle is alive and is—

24 (i) on a beach or shore of the United
25 States and unable to return to the water;

1 (ii) on a beach or shore of the United
2 States and in need of medical attention; or
3 (iii) in waters under the jurisdiction
4 of the United States (including any navi-
5 gable waters), and in need of medical at-
6 tention or other necessary intervention to
7 aid its likelihood of survival.

8 (5) STRANDING AND REHABILITATION RE-
9 GION.—The term “stranding and rehabilitation re-
10 gion” means a geographic region designated by the
11 Secretary under subsection (b).

Passed the House of Representatives April 11, 2024.

Attest:

Clerk.

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