



# EVERGLADES COALITION

## **A Resolution of the Everglades Coalition Recommending the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Adopt Final Rules to Protect Imperiled Diamondback Terrapins**

**WHEREAS**, the diamondback terrapin is the only entirely estuarine turtle in the world and is 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**, the loss of adult terrapins from the wild is a significant threat to the species' survival;

**WHEREAS**, scientific experts in the Diamondback Terrapin Working Group agree that accidental drowning in crab traps is the greatest threat to the diamondback terrapin's future existence;

**WHEREAS**, diamondback terrapin populations are accidentally drowning in blue crab traps 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 traps 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 traps;

**WHEREAS**, requiring bycatch reduction devices or similar protections in recreational and commercial crab traps would significantly reduce the risk of diamondback terrapin mortality in crab traps and meaningfully contribute to the species' overall conservation;

**WHEREAS**, there are currently no rules in Florida to meaningfully protect diamondback terrapins from being caught as bycatch in recreational and commercial blue crab traps;

**WHEREAS**, Florida rules currently allow the taking of one terrapin per person per day from the wild and possession of up to two individual terrapins for personal use, which puts pressure on wild populations and enables poaching and trafficking;

*The Everglades Coalition is a 501(c)3 alliance of local, state, and national conservation organizations dedicated to the full protection and restoration of America's Everglades.*

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has proposed a suite of conservation rules to protect the diamondback terrapin by prohibiting take of diamondback terrapins from the wild, prohibiting possession of terrapins without a permit, and requiring all recreational blue crab traps to have rigid entrances no larger than 2 x 6 inches;

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission continues to undertake a diamondback terrapin biological assessment and research interactions between terrapins and commercial blue crab traps;

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's rule proposals and continued research would limit the loss of adult terrapins from the wild and support the species' conservation.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED ON DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> 2021:**

The Everglades Coalition strongly urges the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to adopt the final rule proposal to prohibit take of diamondback terrapins from the wild, prohibit possession of terrapins without a permit, and require all recreational blue crab traps to have rigid entrances no larger than 2 x 6 inches.

The Everglades Coalition further urges the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to continue researching the terrapin's status, threats, and protections and consider further conservation solutions to protect the species existence, including bycatch solutions in the commercial blue crab fishery and more effective bycatch reduction device designs.



Mark Perry  
Co-Chair



Marisa Carrozzo  
Co-Chair