

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2560

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 10, 2023

Mr. KEATING introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Sea Turtle Rescue As-
5 sistance Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. SEA TURTLE RESCUE ASSISTANCE GRANT PRO-**
7 **GRAM.**

8 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish
9 a grant program, to be known as the “Sea Turtle Rescue
10 Assistance Grant Program”, to encourage and facilitate

1 coordinated rapid response and rescue by awarding grants
2 for the purposes described in subsection (c).

3 (b) DESIGNATION OF STRANDING REGIONS.—The
4 Secretary shall designate geographic regions of the United
5 States as stranding regions for the purposes of carrying
6 out this section.

7 (c) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Program are to
8 provide for—

9 (1) the recovery, short- or long-term care,
10 transportation, and treatment of stranded marine
11 turtles;

12 (2) the release of rescued and recovered marine
13 turtles;

14 (3) the collection of data and samples from
15 stranded marine turtles for scientific research or as-
16 sessments regarding marine turtle health, including
17 tagging information; and

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

21 (d) EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—The
22 Secretary shall ensure, to the extent practicable, that
23 funds awarded under this section are distributed equitably
24 among stranding regions, taking into account—

1 (1) the number of stranding events that oc-
2 curred in each stranding region in the preceding 5
3 years; and

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

8 (e) APPLICATION.—An applicant for a grant under
9 this section shall submit an application in such form and
10 manner as the Secretary shall prescribe.

11 (f) GRANT CRITERIA.—

12 (1) DEVELOPMENT OF CRITERIA.—The Sec-
13 retary shall, in consultation with the Director of the
14 United States Fish and Wildlife Service, establish by
15 regulation appropriate criteria for awarding grants
16 under this section.

17 (2) STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT.—As part of
18 the process for developing and finalizing criteria
19 under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall, in con-
20 sultation with the Director of the United States Fish
21 and Wildlife Service, provide opportunities for en-
22 gagement with representatives from stranding re-
23 gions and representatives of public and private orga-
24 nizations with an established record in rescue, reha-
25 bilitation, and release, as well as related scientific re-

1 search, marine conservation, and forensic science,
2 with respect to stranded marine turtles.

3 (3) REQUIRED CRITERIA.—The criteria devel-
4 oped under paragraph (1) shall prioritize applicants
5 with an established record of rescuing, rehabilita-
6 tion, scientific research, and forensic science with re-
7 spect to stranded marine turtles or conducting sci-
8 entific research and forensic science on stranded ma-
9 rine turtles.

10 (g) LIMITATIONS.—

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

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

19 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
20 are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry
21 out this section \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2024
22 through 2029 to remain available until expended. Not
23 more than 3 percent shall be used for administrative ex-
24 penses to carry out this Act.

25 (i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

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

4 (2) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means
5 the Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance Grant Program
6 established under subsection (a).

7 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
8 the Secretary of Commerce.

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

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

12 (i) on a beach or shore of the United
13 States; or

14 (ii) in waters under the jurisdiction of
15 the United States (including any navigable
16 waters); or

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

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

20 (ii) on a beach or shore of the United
21 States and in need of medical attention; or

22 (iii) in waters under the jurisdiction
23 of the United States (including any navi-
24 gable waters), and in need of medical at-

1 tention or other necessary intervention to
2 aid its likelihood of survival.

3 (5) STRANDING REGION.—The term “stranding
4 region” means a geographic region designated by the
5 Secretary under subsection (b).

○