



SPONSOR: Sen. Hansen & Sen. Sturgeon & Rep. Heffernan &
Rep. Smyk
Sens. Gay, Lawson, Mantzavinos, Paradee, Sokola,
Townsend; Reprs. Baumbach, Gray, Griffith, K. Johnson,
Lambert, Lynn, Yearick

DELAWARE STATE SENATE
151st GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE BILL NO. 303

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 29 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE DESIGNATION OF A STATE SEA TURTLE.

1 WHEREAS, sea turtles play vital roles in maintaining the health of the world's oceans from maintaining
2 productive coral reef ecosystems to transporting essential nutrients from the oceans to beaches and coastal dunes; and

3 WHEREAS, the Delaware Sea Turtle Project aimed to further the environmental education of Delaware students
4 in all grades throughout the State about the life and habitat of the four threatened or endangered species of sea turtles with a
5 connection to Delaware those species being the Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), the
6 Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), and the Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*); and

7 WHEREAS, thousands of students and teachers throughout the State of Delaware have been participating in the
8 Delaware Sea Turtle project since February of 2022; and

9 WHEREAS, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Department of Education, the Department of Natural
10 Resources and Environmental Control, the Marine Education Research and Rehabilitation Institute, Inc. (MERR), and the
11 Delaware Senate Environment and Energy Chair have jointly planned and executed the Delaware Sea Turtle Project with
12 assistance from local artists, environmental organizations and businesses, and educators throughout the state; and

13 WHEREAS, the Delaware sea turtle project included curriculum, essay writing, contests, and art projects, and
14 eventually the naming of an official Delaware state sea turtle, selecting from the four turtles seen in our waters -
15 Leatherbacks, Loggerheads, Kemp's Ridleys, and Green Sea Turtles; and

16 WHEREAS, more than 13,000 students throughout Delaware participated in these activities and voted to designate
17 the Loggerhead Turtle as the official State sea turtle; and

18 WHEREAS, the Loggerhead Turtle is the most commonly occurring sea turtle in Delaware reaching 155 lbs. to
19 375 lbs. and growing to 2.5 feet to 3.5 feet; and

20 WHEREAS, 137 Loggerhead Turtles have been found stranded on Delaware beaches since 2017; and

21 WHEREAS, the Loggerhead species has been on earth for 110 million years; and

22 WHEREAS, Loggerhead Turtles prefer to feed in coastal bays and estuaries, as well as in the shallow water along
23 the continental shelves of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans; and

24 WHEREAS, the Loggerhead species is threatened in the United States by destruction of its nesting habitat due to
25 coastal development, predation of nests, human disturbance, and pollution, especially plastic balloons; and

26 WHEREAS, preservation of the Loggerhead Turtle is critical to maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem in
27 Delaware.

28 NOW, THEREFORE:

29 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

30 § 330. State sea turtle.

31 The Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*) is the official sea turtle of the State.

SYNOPSIS

This bill designates the Loggerhead Turtle as the official sea turtle for the State of Delaware.

Author: Senator Hansen