

# APPENDIX A. TECHNICAL WORKING GUIDELINES (FROM UPITE (2011)).

## TECHNICAL WORKING GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING INJURIES OF SEA TURTLES OBSERVED IN NORTHEAST REGION FISHING GEAR<sup>6</sup>

### Category I – Low probability of mortality (20% mortality rate)

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- Any shell fractures of the area of the marginal scutes, involving less than 50% of width of the underlying peripheral bone
- Superficial abrasions, chips, or scuffs to carapace or plastron
- Minor or superficial injuries to skin
- Animals with no apparent injuries and active normal behavior

### Category II – Intermediate probability of mortality (50% mortality rate)

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- Any shell fractures of the area of the marginal scutes, involving 50% or more of width of the underlying peripheral bone
- Injuries to flippers (including ligature wounds), which may impair movement or function
- Injuries to one eye
- Lethargic, but becomes active before release

### Category III – High probability of mortality (80% mortality rate)

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- Any shell fracture, excluding marginals
- Fractures or wounds penetrating the body cavity
- Evidence of bleeding from cloaca, nares, eyes, or oral cavity, unrelated to superficial wounds
- Skull or mandibular fracture
- Injuries to both eyes
- Injuries to neck (including ligature wounds) which affects the spinal cord, major blood vessels, or airway
- Amputation of half or more of one or more flippers
- Any open fracture of major long bones
- Behavioral abnormality, including circling, not using all four flippers appropriately, head tilting, not raising head, not breathing, eyes closed, listing/rolling, lethargic at release, inability to right itself in the water
- Unresponsive<sup>7</sup>, revived, and released
- Any remaining gear left on the animal at release

*If an animal is found with multiple injuries in different categories, the animal should be placed in the category encompassing the most severe of the injuries.*

*A 100% mortality rate will be assigned to any animal released into the water in a dead or unresponsive state regardless of its condition at first encounter.*

*Old injuries determined to be unrelated to the current gear interaction or animals subject to adverse environmental conditions will be considered in the overall health assessment/survivability determination of the animal.*

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<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this guidance, Northeast Region fishing gear excludes longline gear.

<sup>7</sup> Unresponsive refers to an episode of lack of response to external stimuli at any time. Lack of response criteria may include bilateral eye reflex, bilateral front and rear flipper pinch, corneal reflex, or cloacal clasp.