



IAC BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE PRO TEMPORE SECRETARIAT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES (IAC)

Expropriations Ordered in Las Baulas National Marine Park



Source: The Leatherback Trust

After almost 10 years of delays, the Constitutional Chamber of Costa Rica's Supreme Court of Justice ordered the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINA E) to begin expropriating private lands within Las Baulas National Marine Park (PNMB) in Guanacaste. This decision follows a lawsuit filed by AIDA, the Center for Environmental Law and Natural Resources and Justice for Nature against the National Environmental Technical Secretary (SETENA), the Municipality of Santa Cruz, the Ministry of Finance, and MINAE for allegedly violating the constitutional right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment by not protecting the Park and its leatherback nesting sites. This is a very important precedent in Costa Rica and the hemisphere, given that tourism devel-

opment is proceeding at an unprecedented pace throughout the Americas. The Municipality and SETENA had issued construction permits within the park, ignoring the impacts that this development would have on leatherback turtles, a critically endangered species. With this decision, these permits are now invalid. Leatherbacks require particular nesting conditions that can be easily disturbed by the presence of human beings and construction lights. Hence, the development of tourist sites can severely affect the turtles' reproduction, and consequently, their survival. The PNMB was created for this purpose, since it is one of the most important nesting sites for this species in the Eastern Pacific. Costa Rica has an obligation to protect this species, which is considered common patrimony, in addition to being a tourist attraction and thus a valuable economic resource for the country. (www.aida-americas.org)

The IAC Leatherback Resolution further establishes that Parties having leatherback nesting beaches in the Eastern Pacific must take pertinent conservation measures to protect these sites and their associated habitats.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS:

- **WHMSI.** The Third Conference of the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI) will take place in Paraguay from July 22nd-25th, 2008. The IAC is coordinating a thematic session on marine turtles in order to identify the necessary actions to be carried out by different sectors involved in sea turtle conservation in the Western Hemisphere.
 - **The Fifth IAC Scientific Committee Meeting.** The meeting is scheduled to be held July 29th-August 1st, 2008 in Costa Rica. Agenda items include the analysis of IAC annual reports and incidental capture.
 - **The Fourth IAC Conference of the Parties.** The COP4 will be held from November 4-7, 2008 in Honduras. One of the agenda's priority points is the nomination of the IAC Permanent Secretariat to fulfill the position as of January 1st, 2009. According to Resolution CIT-COPE1-2007-R1, focal points must present their candidates to the COP4 Chair. Each candidate must be proposed and backed by the country nominating him or her.
 - **IAC Training Workshop on Sea Turtle Conservation and Management Techniques.** In order to promote necessary training in sea turtle conservation and management techniques in the Central American region, the IAC will hold a workshop the first week of September of this year in Tortuguero, Costa Rica.
 - **IAC Regional Hawksbill Workshop Update.** The Secretariats of both the SPAW Protocol and the CITES Convention have joined the IAC in organizing this regional meeting for hawksbill conservation. A date has not yet been set for the workshop.
- For more information on these events check out our website www.iacseaturtle.org or e-mail contact@iacseaturtle.org.
- **The First Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Workshop** will be held this year in El Salvador from July 15th-17th with the objective of updating the biological data on this species in the Eastern Pacific. Another objective is to begin working on the Conservation Plan and report on the zoning procedures in marine protected areas. For more information write to gaos@propeninsula.org.

