

# IAC Informative Bulletin News

INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND  
CONSERVATION OF SEA SEA TURTLES (IAC)



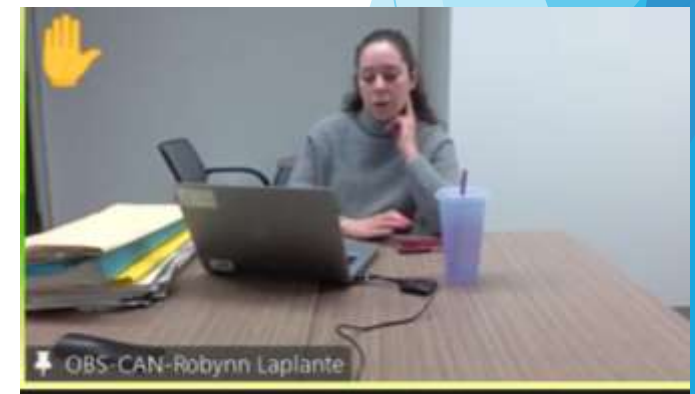
# 16TH MEETING OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS CCE16.

- ▶ The sixteenth meeting of the Consultative Committee of Experts (CCE16) of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), was convened on April 25-26th, 2023, by videoconference. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Eduardo Ponce, Delegate of Mexico with the support of the IAC Secretariat. Delegates from 15 IAC countries attended representing Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, the Caribbean Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay and the CCE sectorial representatives from scientific community, industry/productive sector and NGO community. Observers from the governments of Canada, Colombia, Trinidad & Tobago, France, and Bermuda, were also in attendance.



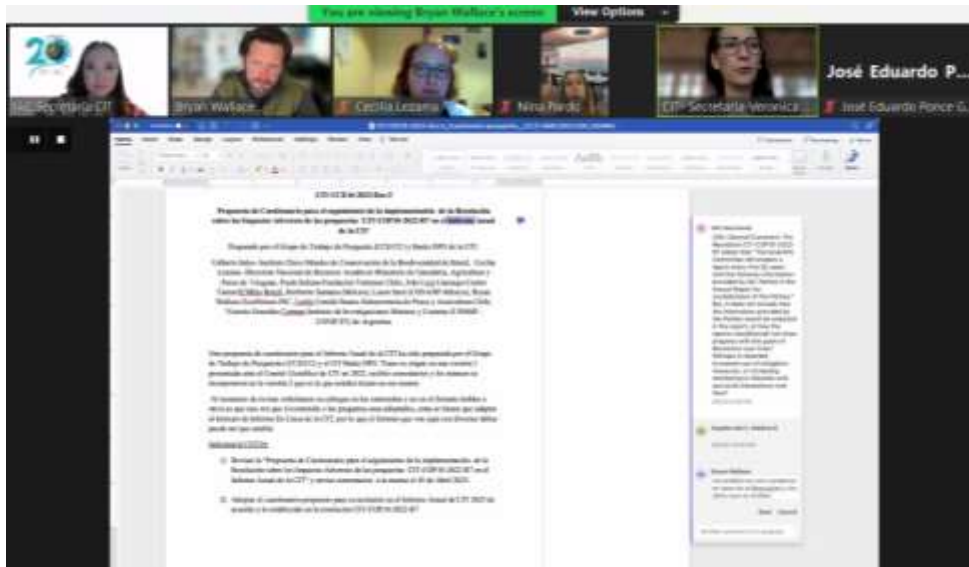
Delegates, Observers and Government representatives during the virtual meeting of the CCE16.  
Credits by: IAC Secretary

- ▶ The CCE16 adopted the technical document [Known “Areas Used by the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Population and recommendations to collaborate in the conservation of the leatherback turtle in these areas CIT-CCE16-2023-Tec.20”](#) prepared by the Northwest Atlantic Leatherback Working Group (this document can be found on the IAC web site) .
- ▶ This document includes a comprehensive evaluation of the existing literature and information, highlighting that many of the high-use areas are currently not being protected and that, a significant number of these are areas are located on the high seas outside the jurisdiction of IAC member countries. Therefore, it is a good opportunity to continue promoting alliances and collaborations with non-Party Countries and other entities that are within the range of distribution of the species. One of these collaborations was agreed at the CCE16 meeting by the signing of the MoU between the IAC Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC).



NWA Leatherback WG members: Ann Marie Lauritsen, Olga Koubrak y Robynn Laplante, during the presentation of the technical document at the CCE16.

- ▶ The CCE16 revised and adopted a questionnaire to be included in the IAC Annual Report to follow up with the implementation of two IAC Resolutions on the impact of fisheries on sea turtles [CIT-COP10-2022-R7](#) and the conservation of the EP leatherback [CIT-COP10-2022-R6](#).



Discussion period for the questionnaire that will work to follow up the implementation of the Fisheries and EP Leatherback resolutions.

- ▶ On the matter of the mechanism for the IAC to follow up with the implementation of the resolutions on exceptions for Costa Rica, Panama and Guatemala, the CCE16 adopted a matrix with indicators that will guide the process for the evaluation of the implementation of the exception management plan for each country
- ▶ The election for Chair and Vicechair was also held where the Consultative Committee of Experts agreed on the re-election of Mr. José Eduardo Ponce (Mexico) as Chair and Mr. Eduardo Espinoza (Ecuador) as Vicechair for the period of two (2) years April 2023-2025.



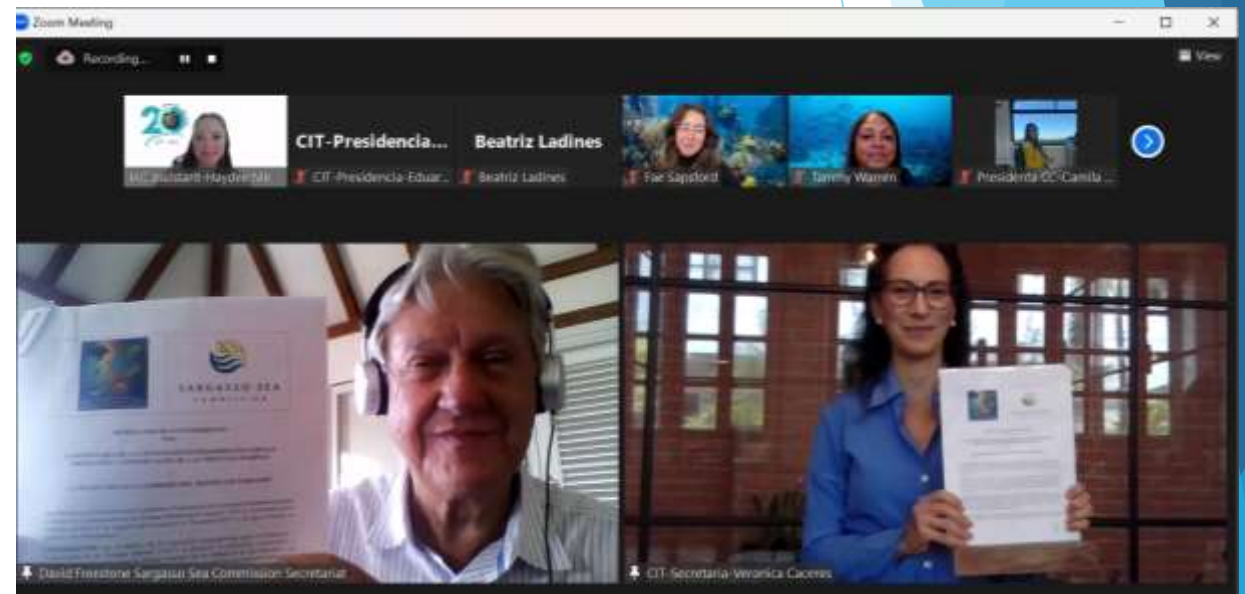
Congratulations to (Left) Dr. Eduardo Ponce, Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP)-México y (Right.) Biol. Eduardo Espinoza, Advisor -Monitoreo de Ecosistemas Marinos - Dirección del Parque Nacional Galápagos- Ecuador, reelected as Chair and Vicechair, respectively for the period 2023-2024.

# Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC)

- ▶ On April 26, 2023, during the second day of the CCE16 meeting, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the IAC Secretary and the Secretary of the Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC).
- ▶ Dr. David Freestone, Executive Secretary of the SSC, recognized the efforts of many people that supported this collaboration and helped draft and negotiate MoU and thanked the IAC Secretariat, and IAC Parties. Joining him on behalf of the SCC were: the Honorable Walter Roban - JP, MP, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs, Government of Bermuda; Ms. Fae Sapsford - SSC, Dr. Tammy Warren -Senior Marine Resources Officer, Bermuda Department of Environment and Natural Resources; and Dr. Sophia Ly from NOAA, United States.

- ▶ The IAC Secretary, MSc. Verónica Cáceres, mentioned the significance of the signing ceremony in the framework of the CCE16 as it was precisely in this Committee that the first technical collaboration of both entities took place in 2013 and 2014 that produced a [Concept Note Importance of Sargasso and the Sargasso Sea for Sea Turtles](#) .

Signing Ceremony of the MoU between IAC and the Sargasso Sea Commission (SSC)



- ▶ The Honorable Walter Roban, JP, MP, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs, Government of Bermuda welcomed the collaboration and stressed that the signing of MoU like this one, promote cross-border collaboration, are vital for the conservation of highly migratory species, such as sea turtles. He highlighted the technical document produced by both entities shows how important the Sargasso Sea is for Atlantic Sea turtles, as it provides a habitat and refuge from predators not only for young green turtles to grow and feed, but also for the hawksbill turtle, the loggerhead turtle and, in addition, it is part of the migratory corridor for the Leatherback turtle. Finally, he mentioned all members of these conventions and their allies should feel very satisfied as the importance of protecting the high seas for all species is finally becoming visible at the international level, which is another compelling reason to continue our conservation efforts.
- ▶ The objective of the IAC - SSC MoU is to provide a framework for collaboration in the work of the IAC and the Sargasso Sea Commission in order to promote, within their respective mandates, the more effective conservation of sea turtle species and the habitats that they utilize and upon which they depend, as well to promote the dissemination of the best available scientific evidence regarding their important ecosystem role.



Photo 1. Words from Honorable Walter Roban JP, MP, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs, Government of Bermuda



Photo 2 Royale Gazzete Bermuda, news on the new MoU signing. [Full article here](#)



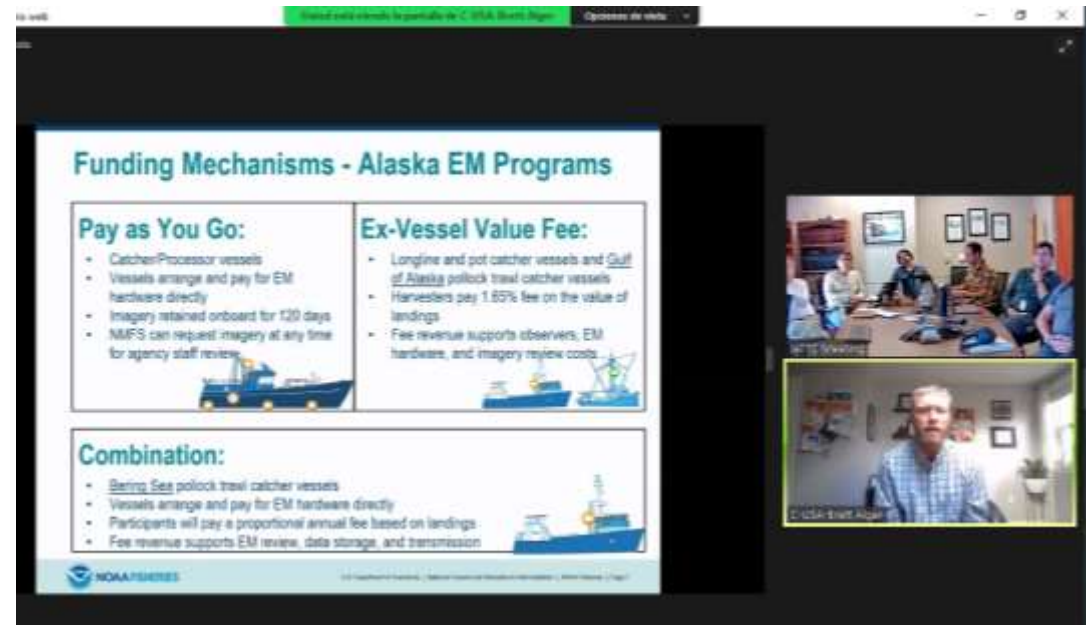
## IAC Attends IATTC Commission Electronic Monitoring Workshop

Dr. Victoria González Carman, IAC delegate to the Scientific Committee (SC) from Argentina and coordinator of the IAC-ACAP Working Group, attended the 5th Workshop on Electronic Monitoring Systems (EMS) in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) organized by the Inter-American Commission for the Conservation of Tropical Tuna (IATTC) on April 24th and 26th, 2023. This meeting was part of a series of workshops that hierarchically addressed the different components of the EMS, such as the institutional structure, the technical standards for collecting data, among others. The aforementioned workshop focused on the financial aspects of EMSs.

The workshop was attended by various experts who spoke about the financial aspects of EMSs applied in various fisheries in the United States, Chile, and Spain, as well as cost-benefit analysis and market incentives implemented in case studies. Photo credits and material for news editing: Dra. González Carman IAC Scientific Committee

This showed the options that could be considered for the financial aspects of an EMS in the EPO. Particularly, the following questions were discussed: What are the fixed or variable costs inherent in EMSs? Who or who should bear these costs (the State, the fishing industry)? Is it possible to finance the EMS that is effective for all the stakeholders involved? How is an effective cost-benefit system implemented in multi-jurisdictional fisheries such as those in the EPO?

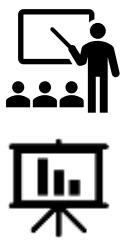
The discussions from the workshop resulted in the IATTC staff outlined preliminary recommendations including: conduct a cost-benefit analysis for the EPO in pursuit of a more efficient implementation of an EMS, establish cost allocation procedures and financing options for all expenses related to the implementation and maintenance of the EMSs and carry out cost recovery studies for the EMSs at the EPO.



*Capture image during the 5th Workshop on Electronic Monitoring (EMS) presentation organized by IATTC.*

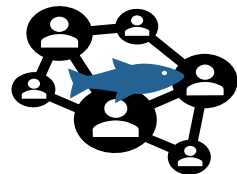
*Photo credits and material for news editing: Dra. González Carman IAC Scientific Committee*





## IAC Participates in ICCAT Meeting of the Subcommittee on Ecosystems and Bycatch

On May 10, 2023, the IAC participated in the Intersessional Meeting of the Subcommittee on Ecosystems and Bycatch of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT). The IAC presented its collaborative work with the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) to evaluate the potential efficacy of conservation measures to reduce fisheries bycatch impacts on critically endangered Eastern Pacific leatherbacks. The presentation was titled: Vulnerability Status and Efficacy of Potential Conservation Measures for the East Pacific leatherback turtle stock using the EASI-Fish approach




The IAC Secretary, Mrs. Verónica Cáceres, introduced the IAC and summarized the collaborative work of an ad hoc working group comprised of members of IATTC’s scientific staff and IAC’s scientific and consultative committees that resulted in two peer-reviewed manuscripts presented at the IATTC’s Bycatch Working Group in 2022. Dr. Bryan Wallace, Chair of IAC’s Leatherback Task Force and scientific sector member of the Consultative Committee was the presenter and answered several questions from the ICCAT Subcommittee about technical aspects of the work as well as implications for management. The IAC plans to continue dialogue with the ICCAT under the MoU between the two Conventions to identify areas of future collaboration.

### Conclusions

*Based on this collaborative effort, we conclude that:*

- **Conservation management measures (CMMs) should be implemented comprehensively across convention area/distribution of the species**
- **Multiple CMMs to reduce bycatch rates as well as post-capture mortality should be implemented in multiple fisheries**
- **Bycatch data collection and reporting from tuna fisheries, as well as artisanal fisheries, must be improved to successfully implement and monitor effectiveness of CMMs**



Credits for news writing material and images: Dr. Bryan Wallace IAC Consultative Committee and Mrs. Verónica Cáceres..

### Background

- Following recommendation of Bycatch Working Group May 2019, collaboration between IAC Leatherback Task Force and IATTC under 2011 MoU.
- Assessing leatherback vulnerability to impacts of bycatch in various fisheries, and potential efficacy of bycatch reduction measures using the EASI-Fish framework (Griffiths et al. 2022)



### EASI-Fish leatherback vulnerability project

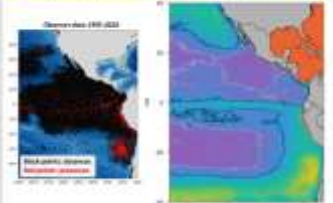
**Phase 1: 2019-2020** (Griffiths et al. 2019)

- Explored several CMMs, individually and in combination
- Identified several areas for improvement
- Established a standing working group of IAC and IATTC collaborators

**Key improvements in Phase 2 and 3 (2021-2022)**

1. **Updated species distribution map** to reflect regionally important areas (Dr. Jon Lopez, IATTC)
2. **Updated data coverage and conservation scenarios** for industrial and artisanal fisheries to be included in EASI-Fish (Dr. Shane Griffiths, IATTC)

### Improvements in Phase 2: Dec 2020-Dec 2021



**I. Updated species distribution model**

Probability of occurrence of leatherbacks in the EPO

Warmer colors = higher probabilities

Key input to identify areas of overlap between leatherbacks and fisheries for EASI-Fish

### Phase 3: EASI-Fish modeling, Jan-May 2022

Conservation Management Measure (CMM) Scenarios:	Fisheries included:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circle hooks</li> <li>• Fish bait</li> <li>• Best handling practices</li> <li>• Illuminated gillnets</li> <li>• EPO-wide closures of industrial fisheries</li> <li>• Combinations of above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrial longlines</li> <li>• Purse seine fisheries, various set types</li> <li>• Artisanal longlines</li> <li>• Artisanal gillnets</li> <li>• "agg selection"</li> <li>• Combinations of above</li> </ul>

**KEY ASSUMPTIONS:**

- Robust CMM effectiveness values unavailable for most fisheries
- Many estimates of CMM effectiveness used here are best-case
- CMMs in each scenario implemented 100% fleetwide
- Model results answer "What if..." scenarios





# Participation of the IAC at the 13th Meeting of the ACAP Advisory Committee

- ▶ The Thirteenth Meeting of the Albatrosses and Petrels Agreement (ACAP) Advisory Committee (AC13) was held from May 22 to 26th, 2023. Dr. Marco Favero (ACAP Population and Conservation Status Working group Convenor, Principal Researcher, National Research Council (CONICET) from Argentina and member of the IAC-ACAP Working Group, presented a document prepared by the IAC-ACAP Working Group expressing the interest of the IAC to take the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU ) with ACAP to the level of implementation, with substantial conservation actions that support what it is established in the MoU.
- ▶ Among these actions are ACAP's advice to the IAC on issues of electronic monitoring of fisheries, the identification of important areas for seabirds and sea turtles, the bycatch mitigation in artisanal and small-scale fisheries, and possibility to provide technical advice to Regional Fisheries Management Organizations. The IAC proposal presented by Dr. Favero was well received and was included in the AC13 Final Report in order to begin with the proposed collaborations



*Group photo from the Thirteenth Meeting of the ACAP Advisory Committee AC13*

*Credits for news editing: Dra. Victoria González Carman ; Photo credits: Dr. Marco Favero*

# Recommendations to institutionalize training programs for fishermen

- ▶ At the 16th Meeting of the Consultative Committee of Experts the delegation from Costa Rica Mr. José Miguel Carvajal-INCOPESCA and Rodney Piedra-SINAC, together with invited speakers Ms. Sandra Andraka - EcoPacífico + and Ms. Mariluz Parga - SUBMON presented the results of a collaboration with INCOPESCA involving capacity development with the fishing sector for best practices for the handling and release of sea turtles incidentally caught in fishing gear with the aim to create a formal training program in Costa Rica to help in good practices to reduce bycatch.
- ▶ The collaboration included the characterization of the fishing fleet, best practices training adapted to local conditions the ports, vessels, target species and fishing gear, and the training courses or workshops for more than 400 fishermen, INCOPESCA officials, SINAC, Coast Guard in 2023.
- ▶ The presenters highlighted that to prepare the training curriculum, it was a collaboration between the technicians and fishermen where the traditional knowledge was included. It is also required a coordination effort among governmental agencies and others to decide who is in charge of the certification and the teaching of the courses to increase local capacities, and increase the number of trainers to replicate the information from the workshops. The recommendation is to create an strategic plan for the training courses where the format of the workshops must be practical and mandatory and refreshing courses should be available.
- ▶ The recommendations were that it is important to know the needs of each country and develop training that adapt to those needs, exchange experiences between countries to identify shared elements and a road map on how to implement successful training workshops.

- ▶ Strengthening institutional capacities in country is key and the management of funding to ensure the implementation of the courses are sustained over time.
- ▶ This is an effective example of inter-institutional efforts, fishermen, and donors who make these initiatives possible. Similar efforts are being carried out in Chile, Peru and Panama, and as long as there is organization of the work and will from all involved, we will see positive changes in the future at the regional level for the benefit of sea turtles beyond the nesting beaches.



Capture images during Mr. José Miguel Carvajal presentation on the experiences shared by Costa Rica on institutionalization of training programs



**CONTACT US**

**Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of sea turtles**

**5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Virginia 22041-3803, USA**

**[contact@iacseaturtle.org](mailto:contact@iacseaturtle.org)**

**[www.iacseaturtle.org](http://www.iacseaturtle.org)**

**Twitter: @IAC\_SeaTurtles**

*IAC Bulletin News No. 48 elaborated by: Haydeé Medina- IAC  
Assistant to the Secretary*

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