Cooperating to Conserve Sea Turtles:

The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC)

Celebrates its

10 year Anniversary

A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARIAT

In commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), we have prepared this special report to recognize and applaud the efforts and achievements carried out by IAC Party countries to conserve and protect the six species of sea turtles found in our waters. This report tracks the progress of the Convention over the past decade, from increased regional cooperation to the commitment of each Party to implement the Convention's objectives. It is a testament to the extraordinary regional efforts taken to preserve these ancient animals, and inspires all of us to continue this good work and address the many challenges that sea turtles still face. Cooperation and collaboration at all levels are imperative to the success of the Convention and ensure the survival of these imperiled species.

The Secretariat exists to facilitate the effective implementation of the Convention and we encourage all Party and non-Party countries to strengthen their commitment to cooperation and compromise so that the IAC and the region's sea turtles will prosper well into the future.

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Cooperating to Conserve Sea Turtles:
The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC)

Celebrates its 10 year Anniversary

SEA TURTLES
IN THE AMERICAS:
A SHARED RESOURCE

This year the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles observes its 10 year anniversary. Just as sea turtles are shared resources, this agreement recognizes that responsibility for their protection and conservation also must be shared. It is fitting that the world's first treaty for sea turtles was signed in the Americas, a region rich in sea turtles with a history of their conservation. Six of the world's seven species of sea turtles once flourished in the region, but in the last several hundred years these long-lived, migratory species have succumbed to multiple threats on beaches and at sea. Today, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) identifies sea turtles as threatened with extinction, with some species faring better than others.

IUCN lists the six species of sea turtles in the Americas as follows:

- Vulnerable: Olive ridley *(Lepidochelys olivacea)*
- Endangered: Loggerhead *(Caretta caretta)*, Green turtle, Black turtle *(Chelonia mydas)*
- Critically Endangered: Leatherback turtle *(Dermochelys coriacea)*; Hawksbill *(Eretmochelys imbricata)*; Kemp's ridley *(Lepidochelys kempii)*.

The Americas provide extensive nesting, foraging, migratory and developmental habitat for the region's sea turtles. By the 20th Century, exploitation for eggs, meat, skin, calipee and shell had exacted a heavy toll on these species. Incidental (unintentional) and intentional capture in numerous fisheries, including trawl nets, longlines, gill nets, and drift nets as well as habitat destruction and pollution have continued to threaten their survival.

Scientists are just beginning to understand the importance of sea turtles in marine and coastal ecosystems as diverse as nesting beaches, coral reefs, and seagrass pastures; growing evidence indicates their roles are valuable and extensive. Sea turtles also provide cultural, aesthetic, and economic value for many communities.

Sea turtles are shared resources in the Americas because they use the waters of multiple nations during their lives. Conservation efforts for a population in one country can be undermined or benefited by activities in another country.

THE IAC:
THE BEGINNING OF A
COOPERATIVE EFFORT

In 1994, in recognition of regional threats to sea turtle survival, the nations of the Western Hemisphere began to negotiate a binding agreement to ensure a future for these species. Two years later the text of the Inter American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) was concluded. In 2001, with the ratification of eight countries, the IAC entered into force.

The cornerstones of the IAC are international cooperation and collaboration to preserve the shared sea turtle resources of the Americas. While all countries have national natural resource legislation, the IAC plays a unique role in supporting regional conservation for sea turtles and the habitats on which they depend by providing a legal framework and promoting multinational

cooperation. In order to strengthen its ability to effect change, the IAC supports efforts to harmonize national legislation throughout the region and support more effective management. The Convention also encourages Parties and non-Parties to develop and implement high priority, regional sea turtle conservation programs.

THE PARTIES AND THEIR COMMITMENTS TO THE IAC

On its Tenth Anniversary, 15 countries from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean, are full members of the IAC. Through its Conferences of the Parties, Consultative Committee of Experts, and the Scientific Committee, work plans and resolutions, the IAC is evolving to address the needs of the region's sea turtles and its Party countries. Private enterprise, local communities, NGOs, and other stakeholders have also been encouraged to participate. Currently 17 non-governmental and other organizations, six individuals and seven inter-governmental organizations participate in the IAC as accredited observers.

The objective of the Convention is "To promote the protection, conservation and recovery of sea turtle populations and the habitats on which they depend, based on the best available scientific evidence, taking into account the environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the Parties."

The Parties of the IAC commit to:

- Protecting and conserving sea turtle populations and their habitats.
- Reducing incidental capture, injury and mortality of sea turtles associated with fishing activities.
- Prohibiting intentional capture and international trade in sea turtles, their eggs, parts and products; turtles may be used to satisfy the economic subsistence needs of traditional communities.
- Fostering international cooperation for sea turtle research and management.
- Implementing additional measures needed for their protection.

7th meeting of the IAC Scientific Committee, Panama 2010

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS: THE CONVENTION TODAY

Today, 15 countries —Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Mexico, Peru, the Netherlands, the United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela — constitute the IAC Contracting Parties. New ratifications by Chile and Argentina (currently submitting their instruments of ratification) which have foraging but not nesting populations, demonstrate that sea turtle conservation must include collaboration by all range states. Participation in the IAC by Parties and growing interest by non-Parties is increasing. With outreach to more countries, membership is anticipated to grow.

The impressive range of activities undertaken by the IAC and its Party countries over the past 10 years includes the following:

- Five Conferences of the Parties and an Extraordinary Meeting: COP1 (Costa Rica), COP2 (Venezuela), COP3 (Mexico), COP4 (Costa Rica), COP5 (Bonaire) and COP Extraordinary (Peru).
- Seven Scientific Committee meetings in Costa Rica, Guatemala and Panama.
- Four Consultative Committee meetings in Costa Rica, Mexico, Belize, and Brazil.
- Five Memorandum of Understanding/Cooperation:
  1. Memorandum of Understanding between the IAC and OLDEPESCA; COP2, 2004.
  2. Memorandum of Cooperation between the IAC and SPAW Protocol; COP3, 2006.
  3. Memorandum of Cooperation between the IAC and OSPESCA; COP3, 2006.
  4. Memorandum of Cooperation between the IAC and CPPS; COP4, 2009.
  5. Memorandum of Cooperation between the IAC and CITES, 2009.
- A workshop in Tortuguero, Costa Rica (2008) to prepare the draft IAC Manual for Sea Turtle Management and Conservation Techniques in Nesting Beaches in Central America.
- A regional workshop on the Hawksbill turtle in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic co-organized by IAC, CITES, SPAW Protocol and the Mexican Government SEMARNAT in Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo Mexico City, (2009).
- The IAC was awarded two grants by the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund of the USFWS in 2010 and 2011.
- A number of visits to non Party countries in the region with emphasis in the Caribbean: Trinidad and Tobago (2010), Nicaragua (2010), Colombia (2010)

and Dominican Republic (2011), to encourage IAC ratification.

- Four technical Resolutions have been adopted:
  - Conservation of Leatherback Turtles *(Dermochelys coriacea)*, 2004
  - Conservation of the Hawksbill Turtle *(Eretmochelys imbricata)*, 2006
  - Reduction of the Adverse Impacts of Fisheries, 2006
  - Adaptation of sea turtle habitats to climate change, 2009

3rd Meeting of the IAC Consultative Committee of Experts, Belize 2010

4th IAC Conference of the Parties, Costa Rica 2009

THE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY COUNTRY REPORTS

Effective long-term sea turtle conservation can only succeed if issues are addressed on all levels from grassroots to international fora. Although a number of IAC Parties have conducted sea turtle conservation for many years, others are developing relatively new programs. The accompanying country reports highlight specific activities in individual member countries and showcase the breadth of activities undertaken by IAC Parties in recent years to effect sea turtle conservation, from the establishment of laws that specifically protect sea turtles or legislation that decreases their interactions with fisheries to the recent establishment of marine protected areas.

BELIZE

Species present(*): *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 3 February, 2003

LAW PROTECTING ALL
SEA TURTLES
SPECIES IN BELIZE

On 22 April, 2002 a Statutory Instrument was signed giving full protective status to all sea turtle species known in our territorial waters. The law was strengthened to include nesting females, hatchlings, eggs and articles made of turtle shell. Penalties for violating this law were increased. The mandatory use of turtle excluder devices was also introduced. A second instrument was signed, effective 1 January 2011, that completely bans trawling in the waters of Belize to protect sea turtles in these areas.

Belize promotes scientific research initiated in agreement with resolutions endorsed by the IAC Conference of the Parties. Two innovative initiatives are the in-water surveys carried out by the Wildlife Conservation Society in conjunction with the Fisheries Department for Glover's Reef Marine Reserve and ECOMAR at the Robinson Point area. This work trains young Reserve biologists in science and methodologies for handling sea turtles. With outstanding preliminary findings, this longterm study is being replicated in other known sea turtle grounds. Of note are data gathered on recaptures and on migratory routes via satellite telemetry; this information was previously unknown to Belizean resource managers.

Photo: In-water survey, WCS

Photo: Sea Turtle Expo, Fisheries Department

The Belize Sea Turtle Conservation Network is a consortium of NGOs working with the Fisheries Department to conserve sea turtles in Belize. This network prepared and hosted a traveling exhibit, the "Belize Sea Turtle Expo 2009", throughout the country. There have been three sea turtle expos in Belize over the past 10 years, with events getting bigger and better each time. The first expo was held at the old Bliss, the second at St. Mary's School, and the third at the Government House/ House of Culture. Members host the traveling Turtle Expo in their communities. All community expenses have been funded directly by member NGO's and the Fisheries Department. The Protected Areas Conservation Trust made a donation specifically for the purpose of producing printed educational materials and t-shirts that were distributed to students at the Turtle Expo. The 2009 Expo was organized entirely by members of the Network to implement the 1992 Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan in order to fulfill our international commitment to the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, of which Belize is a member party since 2002.

Belize Sea Turtle Conservation Network

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

BRAZIL

Species present (*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F/R), *Dermochelys coriacea* (F/R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta Caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 22 November, 1999

Over the past 10 years, Brazil has strengthened its protection and research efforts in the main nesting areas of the five species of sea turtles that are found on the mainland and oceanic islands. Three of these species *(Caretta caretta, Lepidochelys olivacea and Eretmochelys imbricata)* have shown population recoveries.

- New protected areas are being created in nesting sites to ensure the long term survival of these species.
- Laws were made to adapt seismic work and other maritime activities to respect the turtles' reproductive period.
- A National Action Plan to reduce sea turtle bycatch in fisheries was created and is currently being used to address this issue.
- Fisheries found to interact with sea turtles are being monitored, with mandatory reporting on information, in addition to having onboard observers in these fisheries. -Studies on the interaction of these species with fisheries are being developed with the objective of applying different techniques, such as: circular hooks in longline fisheries and temporary closures for shrimp fishing at sea turtle nesting sites.
- Committees were set up to evaluate fisheries and bycatch, as well as increased participation in international fisheries management committees.
- Federal and state laws were passed, establishing zoning regulations, for example: limiting the distance of trawl fisheries from shore; and zones of limited access or use by traditional communities.

Leatherback turtle caught in fishing net

Loggerhead turtle killed by longline hooks

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

Interaction of local residents with conservation activities - Credits: Image Bank Projeto Tamar Brazil

TAMAR-ICMBIO PROJECT

The Brazilian Sea Turtle Research and Conservation Program, Tamar-ICMBio, was created in 1980, with its primary mission being research, conservation and management of the five species of sea turtles that are found in Brazil, all of which are threatened by extinction.

The Tamar/ICMBio Project is executed by the Brazilian Sea Turtle Protection and Research Center – Tamar, associated with the Chico Mendes Biodiversity Institute - ICMBio, and co-administered by the Brazilian Foundation for Sea Turtle Protection and Research Center - Pro-Tamar Foundation, a non-profit, non-governmental institution, that maintains alliances with various national and international public and private institutions.

Currently 1,300 people directly participate in conservation activities, mainly residents from coastal communities that interact with turtles.

More than 400 fishermen participate in conservation jobs.

Nearly 200 students and 60 onboard observers each year are instructed and trained to multiply the actions taken. More than 1,000,000 people visit the Environmental Education Centers each year.

Today TAMAR is recognized as a successful experience in marine conservation and serves as a model for other projects and countries, mostly because it directly involves coastal communities in their socio-environmental work.

CHILE

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F), *Dermochelys coriacea* (F), *Chelonia mydas* (F), *Caretta caretta* (F)
Date ratified: 10 February, 2010

LAWS AND LEGISLATION

Ratification of the Convention: On 10 February 2010 Chile submitted the instrument of ratification to the IAC. On 6 August 2010, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Supreme Decree Nº 114, dated 7 April 2010, was published in Chile's Official Newspaper, adopting the text of the Convention along with the mandate to comply with its terms as a law of the Republic of Chile.

Legal framework for sea turtle protection and conservation: On 11 November 1995, the Exempt Decree Nº 225 of the Ministry of Economy, Promotion and Reconstruction was published in the Official Daily, dated November 9th of that same year. Article 1º establishes that as of the date the decree was published, a national 30 year moratorium on the extraction of 61 different marine vertebrates, including the following species of sea turtles: *Caretta caretta, Eretmochelys imbricata, Chelonia mydas agassizi, Lepidochelys olivacea and Dermochelys coriacea,* was put into place. Article 2º of this regulation establishes, through the resolution of the Fisheries Subsecretary, that capturing live specimens of one or more of these species for captivity can be authorized for the purpose of exhibition, recreation, culture or research. Exempt Decree Nº 135 of the Ministry of Economy, Promotion and Reconstruction (now the Ministry of Economy, Promotion and Tourism), was later published in 2005. This Decree modified Article 1º of Exempt Decree Nº 225, by eliminating *Eretmochelys imbricata* from the list of prohibited species, since this species is not found in waters under the jurisdiction of Chile. At the same time, Article 2º of the earlier decree was also replaced to read: Only the Fisheries Subsecretary can authorize, through a resolution, the capture of live specimens of one or more of these species referred to in Article1º to be kept in captivity, exclusively within national territory for the following purposes:

a) Research, only when it involves the temporary holding of the specimen.
b) Ex situ conservation for endangered species or species with much reduced populations, associated with programs or plans to reintroduce them into their natural environment.

c) Public exhibition in national zoos or aquariums and only in limited quantities. The specimens approved for this purpose cannot be transferred to other centers for exhibition.

MONITORING

OF HIGHLY MIGRATORY RESOURCES – SCIENTIFIC OBSERVER PROGRAMS

In Chile, the swordfish *(Xiphias gladius)* fishery is operated by an industrial surface longline fleet. Since 2001, this fishery has been intensely monitored by the Fisheries Institute (IFOP for its acronym in Spanish) through their project "Monitoring of Highly Migratory Resources."

In order to implement monitoring, technicians were trained to become Scientific Observers (SO), through the "Scientific Observer Program" (POS for its acronym in Spanish). A comprehensive training program was created to improve bycatch identification techniques used by the SO. All training activities resulted in highly qualified SO, which then improved the quality of the information recorded, incorporating all components of bycatch.

In addition, the SO have been able to increase awareness among crews on the importance of marine turtle conservation. This has had a gradual effect on fishing operations which have been modified to make the release of sea turtles a priority. The Scientific Observer Program has influenced the fishing paradigm of the industrial operation altogether while improving the quality of the data recorded. This is an important step towards marine turtle conservation in the Eastern South Pacific.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

COSTA RICA

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F/R), *Dermochelys coriacea* (F/R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 17 April, 2000

MANUAL FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES IN COSTA RICA;

EMPHASIS ON BEACH MANAGEMENT AND HATCHERY PROGRAMS

Sea turtle conservation and research in Costa Rica dates back to the late 1950s. By the 1970s, research was systematized and efforts were made to understand the population dynamics of these reptiles. These actions were directly linked to the establishment of Costa Rica's System of Protected Areas, which included the country's main nesting beaches as wildlife protected areas.

The discovery of two mass nesting beaches for olive ridleys and the documentation and registration of one of the most important leatherback turtle (Dermochelys coriacea) nesting beaches in the Eastern Pacific and the largest green turtle nesting colony in the Western Atlantic were part of the knowledge generated during these years. This effort to conserve, study and protect different sea turtle populations along both coasts of Costa Rica is a role that has been carried out by both the government and private conservation organizations. For reasons not well understood, academic institutions have not been responsible for carrying out major efforts in this field, and have limited themselves to studying the olive ridley turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea) on the Pacific coast.

Given this scenario, over the last decade, efforts have concentrated on mitigating some of the most harmful impacts to nesting populations in the country, such as habitat loss from contamination, sedimentation, solid waste, egg collection and even hunting of females. One of the most widely used tools in the region to counteract these impacts has been the use of hatcheries or areas where nests are incubated.

Since the 1990s, with support from conservation organizations like WIDECAST, Sea Turtle Conservancy and PRETOMA, as well as MINAET's National System of Conservation Areas, efforts have been made not only to develop good science, but also to provide effective conservation measures for these threatened reptiles.

During this time, Law 8325 was passed, which coincided with the moment that the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles entered into force in Costa Rica.

Later, in 2007, the *Manual for Hatchery Management* was published and adopted. One of the most important parts of this process was to standardize the management of the country's nesting beaches. This manual was prepared through an open consulting process, in which two workshops were held. The process represents a product of joint efforts between the private and public sectors. A multidisciplinary and multi-institutional team worked to develop a tool that contained the best techniques and was easy to read and to apply. This This document has been used as a guide for other countries in Latin America served as the basis for the *"Manual for Sea Turtle Management and Conservation Techniques in Nesting Beaches in Central America,"* produced by the IAC.

Lastly, it is clear that the best lessons learned from the past 30 years in sea turtle conservation are in the partnerships between a government that is willing to delegate to a civil society that is concerned about conserving their natural resources, and the diversity of resources that the Costa Rican society has been able to use to cover the expenses of research and conservation. Within this context, different stakeholders must understand the rules of the game at both the technical as well as administrative level; it is here where the manual has made its biggest contribution.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

ECUADOR

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F/R), *Dermochelys coriacea* (R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R)
Date ratified: 6 October, 2000

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES PASS A NATIONAL SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN:

NATIONAL FISHERIES INSTITUTE AND GALAPAGOS NATIONAL PARK SERVICE HEAD ITS IMPLEMENTATION

In December of 2009, the first meeting of national sea turtle experts was held to prepare the country's sea turtle conservation action plan. This tool was developed as a part of a consultative process and was ready for its final approval in October 2010. Delegates from the Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries participated in this process. This document constitutes the backbone for long-term planning strategies and specific conservation actions to which the country must commit, through the use of an inter-ministerial agreement. Likewise, Ecuador has carried out numerous specific activities that have assisted throughout the planning process and increased knowledge of sea turtle conservation. One of these activities was the 3rd Regional Sea Turtle Symposium in the province of Santa Elena. This event was supported by various governmental institutions. In this way, the country is playing an active role in legislative measures and making efforts to implement actions in favor of sea turtle conservation and management.

Parque Nacional Galápagos

Parque Nacional Galápagos

MONITORING OF MAIN GREEN SEA TURTLE NESTING SITES IN GALAPAGOS

Long-term monitoring of nesting trends on the main beaches of Galapagos, has been the country's star program. The Charles Darwin Foundation began the monitoring program seven years ago and, due to the need to continue with this program over the long-term, this responsibility is now being led by the Galapagos National Park Service, the governmental agency in charge of administrating the protected areas in the Galapagos archipelago.

In the past, the most important green turtle *(Chelonia mydas)* nesting site in the Eastern Pacific Ocean has been Michoacán, México. However, overexploitation of this species has caused this population to drastically decline. Today, the Galapagos are considered to be one of the most important nesting sites of the green turtle in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and its population is considered to be stable. This program monitors the population trends and conservation status of this species every year, which helps us to gain a better understanding of population trends and their threats.

"SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION IS A CHALLENGE UNDERTAKEN BY ECUADOR ON A DAILY BASIS"

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

GUATEMALA

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F/R), *Dermochelys coriacea* (F/R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 15 August, 2003

SEA TURTLE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION IN GUATEMALA

Some of the actions taken since adhering to the IAC:

"National moratorium on the consumption of leatherback and hawksbill turtle eggs":
Established in 2006, this initiative first encouraged individuals who harvested sea turtle eggs *(Parlameros)* to turn in leatherback eggs to hatcheries in order to help increase hatching success (an average of 87.36% for all hatcheries in the country). In 2007 this moratorium was extended to include the hawksbill turtle, and was established for a 5 year consecutive period.

"Registration of Hatcheries and *Parlameros*":
A system that registers hatcheries and Parlameros was created in 2008 in order to improve the control of their activities and provide a system for handing over sea turtle egg donations for conservation.

"Modification of Donation Tickets":
In order to facilitate the donation process to the hatcheries as well as to control the trade of sea turtle eggs, the old ticket books, which had existed since 2000, were modified in a way that helps detect illegal trade.

In order to avoid poaching, local volunteers and ARCAS relocate olive ridley nests (Lepidochelys olivacea) from beaches in Chiquimulilla, Santa Rosa, to the hatchery at Hawaii beach. Photo: Scott Handy.

Leatherback hatchling. Photo: Scott Handy

National Sea Turtle Management and Conservation Strategy:
In 2002, aware that sea turtles are a resource being used at a national level and are a shared resource with other nations, and recognizing the need to protect them and attain their sustainable use, Guatemala created a National Sea Turtle Management and Conservation Strategy (ENTM for its acronym in Spanish). This Strategy incorporates five Policies that include the following actions:

Policy 1: To promote research and monitoring…: Information on the number of eggs relocated and hatchlings released from the hatcheries has been collected since 1999. In 2010, microchip tagging of nesting females began at Sipacate Naranjo beach.

Policy 2: The appropriate application of national legislation…: in 2003 Guatemala became a Party to the IAC. In 2006 a moratorium on the consumption of leatherback eggs was put in place; the following year hawksbill eggs were added to the moratorium and it was extended for five years. In 2009 a registration system for Hatcheries and *Parlameros* was created.

Policy 3: Develop awareness campaigns…: Publish seasonal reports that include hatchery results. Guatemala has celebrated the Day of the Sea Turtle since 2008.

Policy 4: To increase training ….: Monitor hatcheries and provide annual training programs. In 2010, a Guide to Hatchery Management was produced.

Policy 5: Management and coordination….: Meetings have been held with fisheries sectors on the appropriate use of TEDs, management and distribution of research funds and coordination of marine monitoring with fisheries and navy authorities.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

HONDURAS

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (R), *Dermochelys coriacea* (R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 1 February, 2001

SEA TURTLE PROTECTION

The first sea turtle protection efforts were carried out in Punta Raton in 1975. In 1979 the Department of Aquiculture declared the first closure for harvesting sea turtle eggs. The National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH for its acronym in Spanish) held the first National Sea Turtle Conservation Meeting, which, with support from WIDECAST, resulted in the creation of the "Action plan for the Recovery of Sea Turtles in the Caribbean Region."

Along the Atlantic coast, protection activities have been underway since 1987 on both the east coast and Mosquito Coast. Currently, sea turtle conservation projects are being carried out on the Bay Islands and Cayos Cochinos. Work is also underway in the Pacific in the Gulf of Fonseca, as noted below.

In 1997, efforts to organize the National Sea Turtle Conservation Network of Honduras (RENAC for its acronym in Spanish) began, which operated effectively until 2003; it is currently being reactivated.

ACTIVITIES FROM 2006 - 2010

Honduras has participated in the IAC Conference of the Parties and Consultative and Scientific Committee meetings, as well as prepared and submitted the country's annual report on compliance with the IAC.

Various organized groups currently work on sea turtle protection matters in the Gulf of Fonseca in the Punta Raton area. These groups involve local populations and marine resource users (fishermen) through the organization and operation of a Local Sea Turtle Protection Committee called CVC-Golf. Another local group works in the Mosquito Coast of Honduras, where members have formed and run a Community Conservation Committee in the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve, located in the Garifuna community of Plaplaya. In the coastal region of Brus Lagoon in the Honduran Mosquitia, activities to protect sea turtles have been carried out since the late 1980s. This work has been done without any help from the outside, making it an exceptional example of what strong will and determination of the local community can achieve.

Important environmental education efforts have been made at both the local and regional level by installing Educational Centers at sites where sea turtle conservation activities are being carried out, specifically in: Gulf of Fonseca, Utila Island, Plaplaya area (Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve), as well as locally around the Cayos Cochinos. A Visitor Center was built in the town of Punta Raton and later enlarged, with financial support from the Natural Resources and Environmental Secretary (SERNA for its acronym in Spanish) using municipal funds. This building will be used to carry out conservation activities for the olive ridley sea turtle.

New Visitor Center in Punta Ratón, Marcovia, Choluteca

Research Center for the protection of olive ridley turtles in El Venado, Marcovia, Choluteca

Community Marine Turtle Committee, Plaplaya, Gracias a Dios, Atlantic Coast of Honduras

2010 closed season at Dorada Beach, Punta Condega, Choluteca

The NGO PROTECTOR, with support from Loma Linda University in California, has provided the CVC-GOLF Committee with the training materials needed for research. This was done in coordination with the Small Grants Program (SGP/UNDP) and the General Biodiversity Department (DiBio/SERNA). A transmitter has been placed on a turtle in order to track the movements of this animal in the Gulf of Fonseca (Pacific) and study her nesting activity.

Since 2010, DiBio, as focal point to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UNPD, through their Small Grants Program (SGP), have been supporting El Venado Research Center by providing researchers with lodging and materials for working with nests as well as plans for ecotourism. They offer the support of trained technical personnel and write proposals for projects that will generate funds so that the center may become self sustainable. El Venado is considered to have the most experience managing hatchlings. Without the help of local authorities, a group of 16 fishermen have dedicated their time, money and efforts to protect this species by extending the closure period and have relocated up to 20,000 eggs. Honduras has enforced the ban (which lasts from September 1st to the 25th) on harvesting of sea turtle eggs from 2006 - 2010 with help from the Certification and Environmental Control Commission (CVC–GOLF) and fishermen in the southern part of the country, especially within Ramsar sites.

Olive Ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea) Sea Turtle Protection in the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras, Central America

Objectives: To carry out actions in favor of the protection and conservation of olive ridley turtles. Community outreach in the area on how to conserve sea turtles. Strengthening communities through providing sustainable alternatives involving this species. SERNA is working together with the local communities, the Forestry Conservation Institute, CVC-GOLF and others, to extend the actual closure, which lasts for 25 days, to three months.
Results: Community outreach on the idea that protecting and conserving this resource can generate income through ecotourism. Building of visitor centers and lodging for tourists, volunteers, national and international students and researchers.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

MEXICO

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F/R), *Lepidochelys kempii* (F/R), *Dermochelys coriacea* (R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 11 September, 2000

SPECIES CONSERVATION ACTION PROGRAMS

Species Conservation Action Programs (PACE, by its Spanish acronym) are developed by the Federal Government with the participation of all the different sectors involved in sea turtle conservation: academic, public employees, private companies and members of the civil society. The strategic lines of action developed by PACE are: protection, management, restoration, awareness, culture and administration. These lines of action not only aim to fulfill conservation goals, but also to promote the development of economic activities, strengthen community organization and favor institutional synergies. Each line of action specifies the activities and actions that must be undertaken to conserve and recover populations over the short, medium and long term. So far three of six sea turtle PACEs have been published (leatherback, hawksbill and green/black sea turtles).

http://www.conanp.gob.mx/pdf_especies/PACE_TORTUGALAUD_F.pdf

USE OF MARINE HABITATS BY LEATHERBACK TURTLES

In 2010, transmitters were attached to two female leatherbacks at Barra de la Cruz beach in the State of Oaxaca: Quetzal and Balam were the names given to the turtles and their inter-nesting movements in the ocean were tracked as a pilot study. In the future, this will allow us to learn more about habitat use in front of nesting beaches during the reproductive season and possible interactions with coastal fisheries. After the transmitters were attached, one turtle nested again and later both turtles traveled towards the Galapagos Islands where the signals were lost. In May 2008, a group of 20 international experts in incidental turtle capture in fisheries held a meeting with an emphasis on leatherbacks. . These specialists were decision makers, researchers and members of the civil society from the United States, Peru, Chile and Mexico. During the meeting, fisheries topics relating to interactions with leatherbacks and international legislation were reviewed to establish priority actions to help reverse this problem. A document that summarizes this meeting and provides recommendations on how to recover the leatherback population in the Eastern Pacific is available.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

PANAMA

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F/R), *Dermochelys coriacea* (F/R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 15 February, 2008

MARINERA BEACH, AN OLIVE RIDLEY *(LEPIDOCHELYS OLIVACEA)* NESTING BEACH ON THE PACIFIC, HAS BEEN DECLARED A RESERVE

Marinera Beach, located in the far south of Panama, has been declared a Reserve by Ms. Maricel Morales, Acting General Administrator of ARAP, through resolution N°092 of 12 August 2010, which was published in the Official Gazette Nº 26604-A on 23 August 2010. This achievement was accomplished through the joint efforts of ARAP personnel, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, the University of Panama, the International Maritime University of Panama and Conservation International, all of whom demonstrated to the authorities how important this beach is in preserving olive ridleys in Panama and recovering the species.

Every day sea turtles face many different natural and human threats, both at sea and on land. The impact of human presence continues to seriously degrade sea turtle populations in the Azuero ecoregion. Coastal development, fisheries bycatch, direct take of sea turtles and poaching of their eggs are considered to be the main threats. Consequently, this declaration will enable ARAP to contribute to outreach and awareness activities carried out in surrounding coastal communities on the importance of this resource and will facilitate the possibility of attaining national and international funds to support research and protection activities. This beach, located at Guánico in the district of Tonosí, Los Santos Province, is Panama's first Reserve declared by ARAP for the protection and conservation of sea turtles. With the establishment of this Reserve, Panama continues to uphold its commitment and carry out efforts that integrate the recommendations of international bodies to which it belongs into viable actions that protect and conserve sea turtle populations present in their country.

L. olivacea monitoring - Photo: Sotero Morales

La Marinera Beach - Photo: Marino E. Ábrego

SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION ACTIONS ON NESTING BEACHES LOCATED AT KEY SITES ON PANAMA'S PACIFIC COAST

Olive ridleys are well-known for mass nesting, but some individuals are solitary nesters. Monitoring of solitary olive ridley *(Lepidochelys olivacea)* nesters began in July 2009 at Marinera Beach. Panama's Authority on Aquatic Resources (ARAP) undertook joint actions with scientists from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI), students from the International Maritime University of Panama and with financial support provided by Conservation International. Actions included collecting morphometric data on nesting females, eggs and nests as well as starting a tagging program. As soon as Panama joined the Global Arribada Program, coordinated by Dr. Roldán Valverde, researchers began collecting data to estimate abundance and trends. Hatching success of the nests is also being determined. The project's objectives are to carry out actions that will help reduce existing threats to sea turtles, with regard to the interconnectivenss of their populations while taking into account their reproductive and nesting sites along the Pacific coast of Panama. A Work Plan for the Marinera Reserve is being created to plan conservation activities, collect information and compare data on natural and relocated nests using an experimental hatchery for the second year. In addition, ARAP personnel are being trained in sea turtle conservation. They collect biological, biometric and environmental data on sea turtles and their nests, produce educational and audiovisual materials (brochures and a video on the Sea Turtles of Panama), update the data base and lastly, are working on an assessment of the main treats to sea turtles in the Azuero ecoregion. A Tagging Program (so far, 1,200 turtles have been tagged) and a volunteer program with both young people and adults participating, have been started at Marinera beach. In addition, students from the Technological University of Panama and the International Maritime University of Panama began working on graduation projects, such as measuring the effects of lighting on sea turtles and determining the density of arribada nests by quadrat sampling.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

PERU

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F), *Dermochelys coriacea* (F), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F), *Chelonia mydas* (F), *Caretta caretta* (F)
Date ratified: 18 November, 1999

IN PERU, ALL SPECIES OF
SEA TURTLES
ARE PROTECTED BY LAW

Supreme Decree Nº 026 –2001-PE: Prohibits the capture of all species of sea turtles.

Supreme Decree Nº 034-2004-AG: Lists the following species of sea turtles *Caretta caretta, Chelonia mydas agassizzi, Eretmochelys imbricata* and *Lepidochelys olivacea* as species in danger of extinction, and Dermochelys coriacea as a critically endangered species.

The ratification of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) has encouraged Peru to hold a series of meetings in order to prepare their national reports. These meetings have provided a great opportunity to gather everyone who is doing research on sea turtles in Peru and has created a space to exchange information, which has not been achieved by any other means. Additionally the government has provided training through the Fishermen's Outreach Program, producing educational materials. Many Non-Governmental Organizations have developed environmental education programs to increase awareness and participation of the local population in activities involving sea turtle conservation.

PRESENCE OF SEA TURTLES
AND THEIR FEEDING ECOLOGY
IN PISCO, PERU

This Project began in 2010 and is being lead by Pisco's Coastal Laboratory of the Ocean Institute of Peru. The project's objectives are to determine the population structure of the sea turtles inhabiting the Paracas Bay, an important feeding ground in Peru, as well as the type of food available in the area in order to determine if the turtles are residents of the bay or if they migrate to a different area. This is achieved through tagging activities, sampling of the algae covering the carapace, collection and identification of epibionts, skin sampling to study stable isotopes and genetics and washing the esophagus. Seven trips have been made, each one lasting two days and employing 4 nets measuring 1000 meters long, 4 meters tall, with a 65 centimeter mesh. So far 48 specimens of Eastern Pacific green turtles *(Chelonia mydas agassizi)* have been analyzed. Two types of turtles have been found in the bay: residents of the area and migratory animals that come from other places. Paracas Bay is a feeding ground for both juvenile and adult specimens.

Once this project determines the population structure, seasons and frequency with which the turtles visit the bay, it will be possible to establish an alternative income for the fishermen involved, through implementing tourism activities like site sighting for turtles in the bay. This will generate an alternative income for community members while at the same time making a significant contribution to the conservation of sea turtles.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

THE NETHERLANDS

Species present(*): *Dermochelys coriacea* (R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (R/F), *Caretta caretta* (R/F)
Date ratified: 29 November, 2000

SEA TURTLE MONITORING
ON BONAIRE, ST. EUSTATIUS, AND ST. MAARTEN

As a result of the ratification of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, the Netherlands Antilles has supported the initiation or continuation of sea turtle monitoring programs on the islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and St. Maarten. St. Maarten and St. Eustatius nesting beaches are monitored yearly by the respective national park foundations that are all members of the WIDECAST network, providing quantitative data on nesting species and frequency. These monitoring programs also provide an effective instrument to build public awareness on the islands. On Bonaire, Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire (STCB), also a member of the WIDECAST network, was already monitoring nesting turtles but this was expanded to also include in-water monitoring of foraging turtles, and a satellite tracking program that has to date tracked a total of 20 sea turtles, mainly hawksbills, but also a number of green turtles. In 2010 STCB tracked two hawksbills and one green turtle; the green turtle reached foraging grounds in the Los Roques archipelago of Venezuela. One hawksbill traveled to the shallow undersea banks between Nicaragua/Honduras and then to Jamaica as did several other tracked turtles in previous years. The second hawksbill was still traveling by the end of November when it was close to the island of Anegada in the British Virgin Islands (http://www.bonaireturtles.org/what-we-do/satellite-tracking/). On St. Eustatius two green turtles and one hawksbill were also tagged and tracked in 2010 in collaboration with STCB and led by sea turtle expert Robert van Dam.

Green turtle grazing on sea grass– photo by Robert van Dam

NEW FISHERIES
LEGISLATION ON CURAÇAO PROHIBITING GILL NETS

At the end of 2009 the island of Curaçao of the Netherlands Antilles passed legislation that prohibits the use of gillnets in coastal waters. Gill nets are one of the fishing methods on Curaçao that have a significant amount of sea turtle bycatch; use of gill nets is the preferred way for poachers to catch sea turtles. In 2009 the island passed a decree to implement an article of the Fisheries Ordinance of a few years earlier that prohibits the use of gill nets. This is a major step to enable enforcement of the protection of sea turtles since gill nets now can be immediately confiscated, preventing their further use to catch sea turtles. During a transition period, legitimate fishermen can request a permit to use gill nets that they already possess on the date of the decree, but after five years this will no longer be allowed. In the past few years an area with many foraging sea turtles was targeted repeatedly by people using gill nets to illegally catch sea turtles. This practice can now be stopped immediately whether turtles have been caught or not.

Hawksbill turtle fitted with satellite transmitter on Bonaire- Photo STCB

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F), *Lepidochelys kempii* (F), *Dermochelys coriacea* (F/R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 21 February, 2001

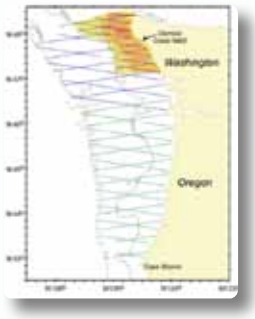
The United States has been a party to the IAC for 10 years now. During that time, the United States sea turtle science and management program has only grown both domestically and internationally. One of the biggest developments since the United States became a party to the IAC, was the passage of the Marine Turtle Conservation Act. The Act provides the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service with a dedicated fund to support on-the-ground conservation initiatives on behalf of the world's imperiled marine turtles (www.fws.gov/international/DIC/species/marine_turtles/mt_howtoapply.html).

Since the first appropriation of $100,000 U.S. in 2005 the MTCA Fund has grown to two million dollars in 2010 because of recognition by the U.S. Congress and the great threats facing these species globally and the critical needs the MTCA Fund is contributing to global marine turtle conservation. Between 2005 and 2010 the MTCA provided $5,637,000 for 154 projects in over 30 countries globally. Of this amount over $2,336,000 has been expended in the Western Hemisphere to support 65 projects in alignment with the goals of the Inter-American Convention including in Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Brazil, Barbados and Grenada. A few examples from these projects are below.

Project Title: Sea Turtle Research, Conservation and Capacity Building at Tortuguero, Costa Rica
Funding: FWS: $40,000 Leveraged funds: $371,147.
This grant supports capacity building throughout Latin America and the Caribbean through the Sea Turtle Conservancy's Tortuguero training program in marine turtle research and management techniques, community involvement, and ecotourism for regional biologists, natural resource managers and community leaders.

Project Title: Conservation of Pacific leatherbacks and other marine turtles in Junquillal Beach, Costa Rica
Funding: FWS: $22,000 Leveraged funds: $22,000.
This grant supports a community based conservation project in cooperation with World Wildlife Fund on one of the key leatherback nesting beaches on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica and involves protection of nests from poaching, reforestation of a deforested section of the nesting beach to address potential lethal incubation temperatures, and environmental education outreach to local schools.

Project Title: Capacity building for the Inter-American Sea Turtle Convention with special focus on hawksbill conservation
Funding: FWS: $52,635 Leveraged Funds: $13,000.
This grant will support capacity building of the IAC – Secretariat and support Secretariat efforts to conduct outreach visits in the Western Hemisphere to expand membership of Parties, as well as provide leadership to harmonize regulations, laws, and management policies among Caribbean nations effecting hawksbill conservation efforts.



NOAA RESEARCHERS USE AERIAL SURVEYS TO DOCUMENT THE DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE OF LEATHERBACK TURTLES IN COASTAL WATERS OF THE U.S. WEST COAST

In the last ten years, the United States has increased its understanding of how sea turtles use U.S. waters. One of the more recent examples is on the U.S. West Coast. The endangered Pacific leatherback turtle *(Dermochelys coriacea)* arrives along the U.S. west coast in late summer and fall to feed on large groups of jellyfish. Unfortunately, the poaching of eggs and breeding females and accidental capture by fishing nets have led to the demise of leatherback populations around the Pacific. As a result, this species has become a conservation priority for NOAA - National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A primary goal by these management agencies is to determine the status of Pacific leatherbacks along the U.S. West Coast, in the states of California, Oregon, and Washington. Leatherbacks foraging in this region originate from nesting beaches in the western Pacific Ocean, and understanding their status will benefit conservation throughout the Pacific.

Since 2000, researchers from NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center have conducted aerial surveys along the U.S. west coast to determine leatherback distribution and abundance. The team conducted surveys for the first time in the northern-most leatherback foraging areas along the Oregon and Washington coasts (see map). The region has been proposed for leatherback turtle critical habitat designation in support of Endangered Species Act mandates.

Previous knowledge of leatherback use of U.S. EEZ waters in the Pacific Northwest came primarily from opportunistic sightings from platforms and telemetry deployments that originated from western Pacific nesting beaches. The 2010 effort was the first attempt to systematically survey all northwest waters utilized by leatherback turtles.

Distribution of leatherbacks within neritic Washington waters was similar to patterns observed off the central California coast. Leatherbacks were encountered inside the 200m isobath, in the vicinity of brown sea nettles, and in cool waters (14-15oC) with elevated chlorophyll levels. Leatherback association with brown sea nettles was informative because previous foraging ecology studies of leatherback off central California waters have revealed that they select this species of sea jelly over other species. Similar surveys are planned for the next two years in an effort to better understand the seasonal and annual trends in leatherback presence near Oregon and Washington.

Contributed by: Jeffrey Seminoff and Scott Benson, SWFSC Marine Turtle Ecology & Assessment Program

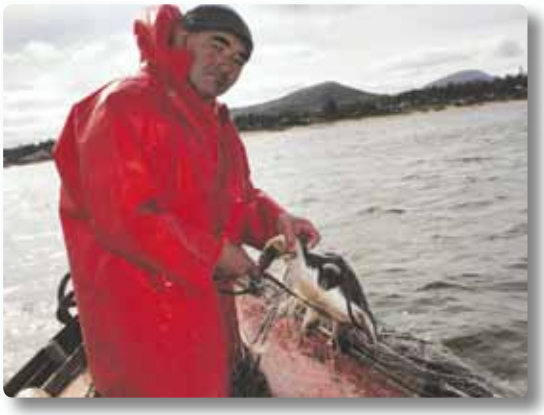
(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

URUGUAY

Species present(*): *Dermochelys coriacea* (F), *Chelonia mydas* (F), *Caretta caretta* (F)
Date ratified: 27 august, 2007

SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION IN URUGUAY: THE OCEANS MAJOR CHALLENGE

Over the last few years, many different initiatives for sea turtle conservation in Uruguay have been created. The National Department of Aquatic Resources (DINARA for its acronym in Spanish), through its Pelagic Resources Unit, continues to monitor incidental capture of sea turtles in pelagic longline fisheries targeting sword fish, tuna and shark. In the international arena, DINARA has helped the ICCAT establish measures to mitigate incidental capture on vessels of signatory countries and increase the survival rate of captured sea turtles. At a national level, DINARA is assessing the efficiency of using circle hooks as a means to reduce incidental capture in this fishery. To date, they have evaluated over 100,000 hooks during fishing trips on commercial vessels. In 2008, DINARA began studying the movements and habitat use of juvenile loggerhead turtles in the marine environment of the Southwestern Atlantic. In 2010, fieldwork carried out with researchers from Brazil's Tamar Project was finished, producing a standardized sequence for capture per unit of effort that plays an important role in the population studies that will be developed over the next few years. These activities have been carried out with gear provided by NOAA and thanks to the technical support received from the NGO "Center for Marine Research and Conservation" (CICMAR).



IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS TO INCIDENTAL CAPTURE OF SEA TURTLES IN THE COASTAL WATERS OF URUGUAY

CICMAR is currently monitoring incidental capture in coastal bottom trawl fisheries to determine what conditions cause the highest capture rates and mortality. To complement this information, a project was recently started to identify the areas most frequently used by loggerhead turtles in La Plata River and its marine front. The objective of this project is to contribute to the information available on adult specimens of this species. Currently, little is known about this species outside of its nesting season, and there is no information on its use of the waters of Uruguay.

Since 2002, the NGO "Karumbé" has been working on evaluating incidental capture of sea turtles by artisanal fishermen. In 2004, a mitigation component was included in their project, and with the active participation of fishermen, together they look for solutions. Karumbé hopes to achieve success by getting fishermen involved and committed to conservation and data collection. By holding joint workshops, their search for alternatives begins to provide results, from changes to fishing gear to modifications in fishing operations. It is hopeful that these small changes will contribute to the reduction of incidental capture of sea turtles in the coastal zones of the Rio la Plata Estuary.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

VENEZUELA

Species present(*): *Lepidochelys olivacea* (F), *Dermochelys coriacea* (F/R), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (F/R), *Chelonia mydas* (F/R), *Caretta caretta* (F/R)
Date ratified: 20 August, 1998

As part of the guidelines established in the ***National Project "Simón Bolívar"*** and in the ***"2010-2020 National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation"*** Venezuela has undertaken deliberate actions to develop programs and projects dedicated to ensure the preservation of sea turtles feeding and nesting in the country's insular and coastal zones.

In 2001 the Green Turtle *(Chelonia mydas)* Monitoring and Conservation Program at Aves Island Wildlife Refuge (Federal Branches) was reinitiated. This Refuge is considered to be the second most important nesting site for this species in the Caribbean. Since then, monitoring and conservation activities have been coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment and carried out through the National Office for Biological Diversity (ONDB), protecting 3,902 nests on the island. In 2010 alone, a total of 110,000 hatchlings were released.

Since 2003, Venezuela has been continuously implementing different sea turtle conservation actions in other parts of the country. It is important to highlight the conservation projects being carried out along the northern and southern coasts of the Paria Peninsula (state of Sucre to the East of the country), as well as off the central coast of Venezuela (state of Vargas). It is through these projects that activities like beach monitoring, track counts, nest relocation as well as rescue and release of hatchlings are being done. The most frequent species nesting are *Dermochelys coriacea and Eretmochelys imbricata*. Thanks to these efforts, 23,612 hatchlings have been released. These projects have also gotten members from surrounding communities to participate, resulting in an increased participation of local populations in conservation activities.

Venezuela hosted the IAC's Second Conference of the Parties in 2005. Within the agenda of this meeting, the book "Sea Turtles of Venezuela: Actions for their conservation", was published. This book describes different topics related to preserving these animals, including: a description of the species, relevant research and conservation programs and projects, hatcheries activities and the recovery of stranded animals, in addition to national and international legislation that protects these endangered species.

In 2008, a Decree was published that has the same Value and Classification as a Fisheries and Aquiculture Law (Official Extraordinary Gazette of Venezuela N° 5.877 of 14 March 2008). This Decree prohibits industrial trawl fishing within the territorial sea and within Venezuela's Economic Exclusive Zone as of March 2009. After publishing this decree, Venezuela has seen a notable decrease in the amount of sea turtle bycatch from fishing.

In 2010, within the framework of the National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation, ONDB held the workshop ***"Towards a communal building of the National Action Plan for Sea Turtle Conservation".*** The objective of this workshop was to form the bases necessary to prepare this action plan through an integrated and participatory process, including the participation of local communities and researchers. This same year more than 1,600 people participated in 18 different workshops in a communal effort to prepare the National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation.

(*) F = foraging, R = reproduction

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