

# Situational Analysis of the Conservation of Sea Turtles in Guatemala

## Effectiveness, Sustainability and Community Involvement



Colum Muccio, Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Association (ARCAS)  
 WIDECAS Annual General Meeting/33<sup>rd</sup> International Sea Turtle Symposium,  
 Baltimore, Maryland, February 2013/ *(This version of the presentation was updated to include the final findings of the Analysis and is not the version presented in Huguico)*



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## SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Analysis of sea turtle conservation efforts being carried out in Guatemala within the context of the National Sea Turtle Strategy and with particular attention paid to the egg donation system as an exception under the IAC, and in terms of the socioeconomic and ecological sustainability in the short and long term. Comparison with the egg ban in El Salvador.





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## The sea turtle egg donation system in Guatemala

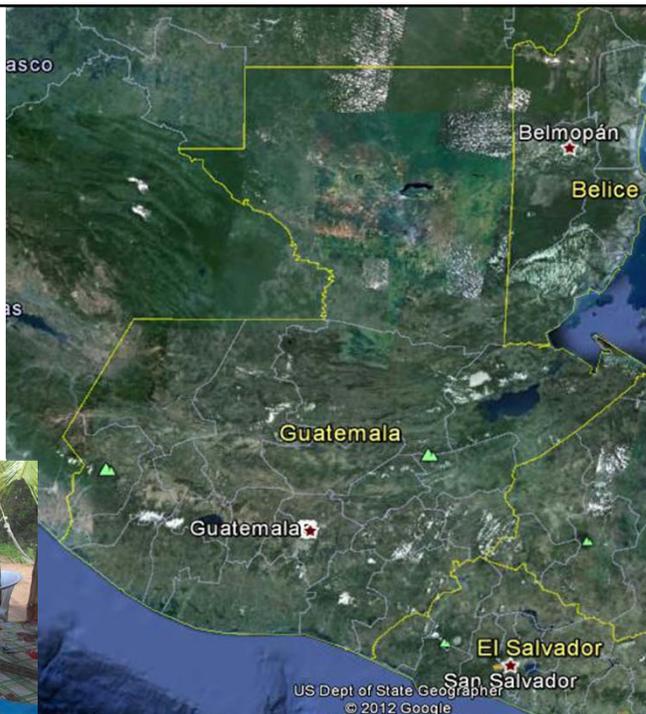
- With a “donation” of 20% of each nest, an egg collector can sell the remaining 80%
- This is an “exception” to the IAC
- The system relies heavily on hatcheries
- It is an informal, decentralized, and underfunded system
  - ... but has popular support
- Only olive ridleys



Scott Handy, Akazul

### INTERVIEW SURVEY

55 interviews,  
70 participants,  
including hatchery managers, rangers, educators, and sea turtle egg collectors and merchants. Visits to markets, border points, NGOs and government organizations.





### **Punta Manabique**

- Solid waste from Motagua River
- Ingovernability
- Greens, hawksbills, leatherbacks and loggerheads



Though there are occasional shells for sale in local markets, there is little evidence of meat consumption or a hawksbill shell industry





## Tahuexco

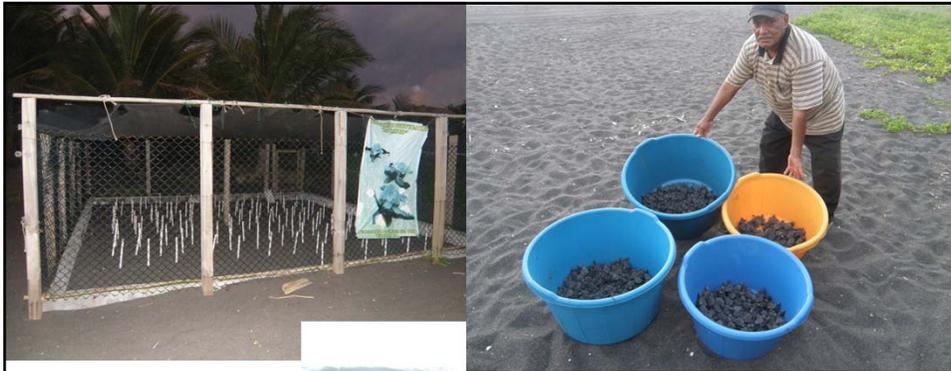
Southwest

- Little support
- No tourism
- Lack of technical capacity



## Parlamar - PSJ





## El Banco

Increasing support from the private sector



## La Barrona

Southeast

- Olive ridleys not a priority for donors
- Volunteer tourism the only option
- Insecurity



## Hawksbills?

There are strandings and incidental catches in the beaches and mangrove lagoons of the southeast...

... but no documented nestings.



Fotos: Scott Handy, Akazul



## Pacific Greens

First documented nesting in Hawaii in August, 2008

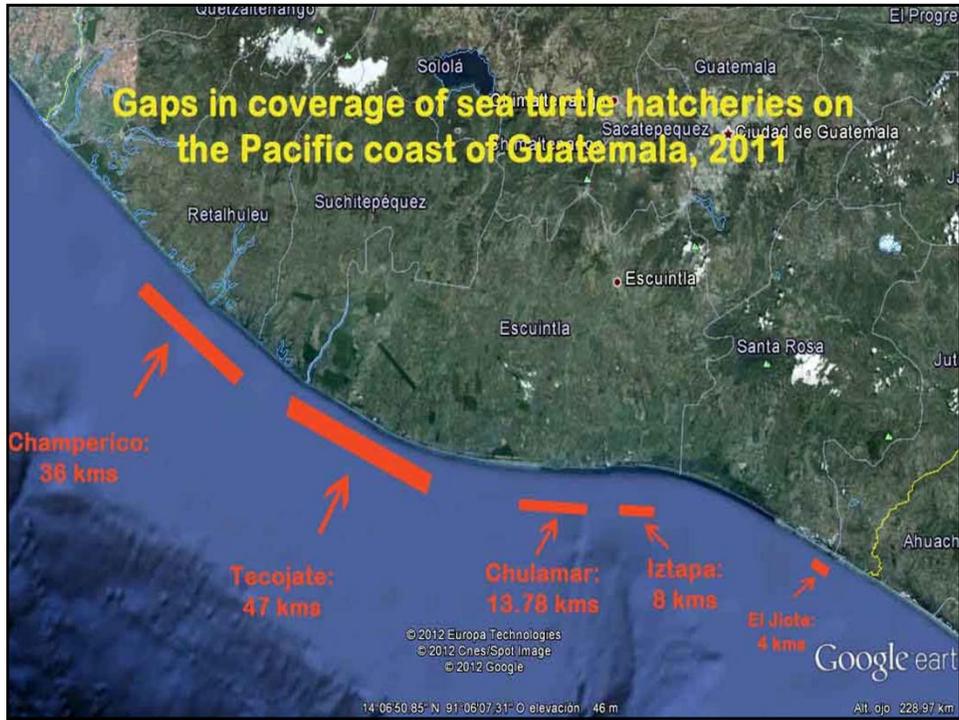
Two documented, and two reported nestings in Septiembre, 2011

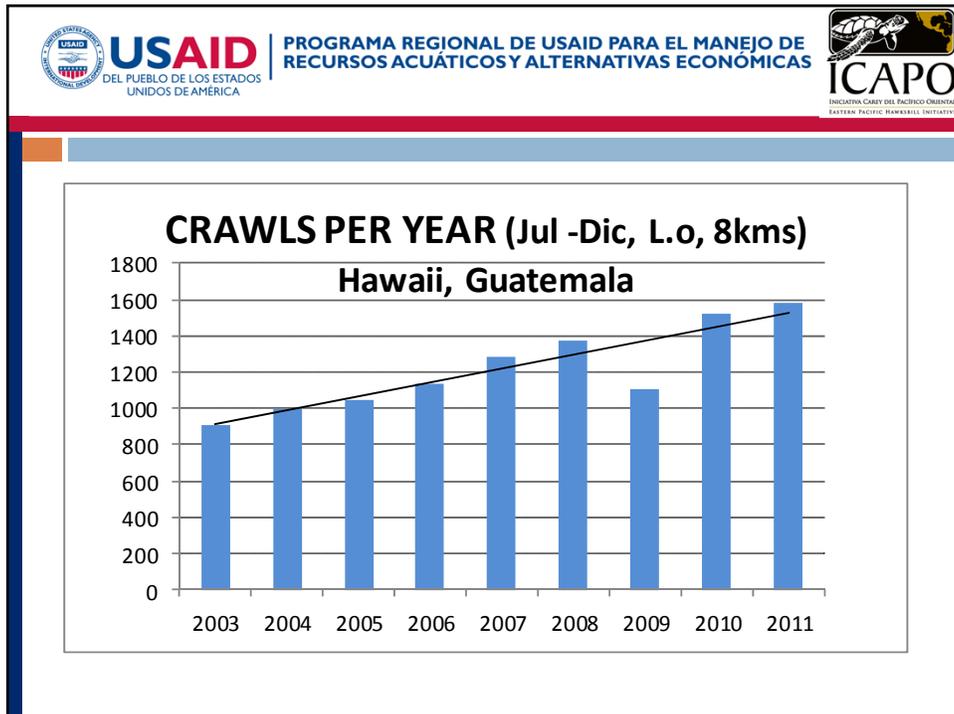


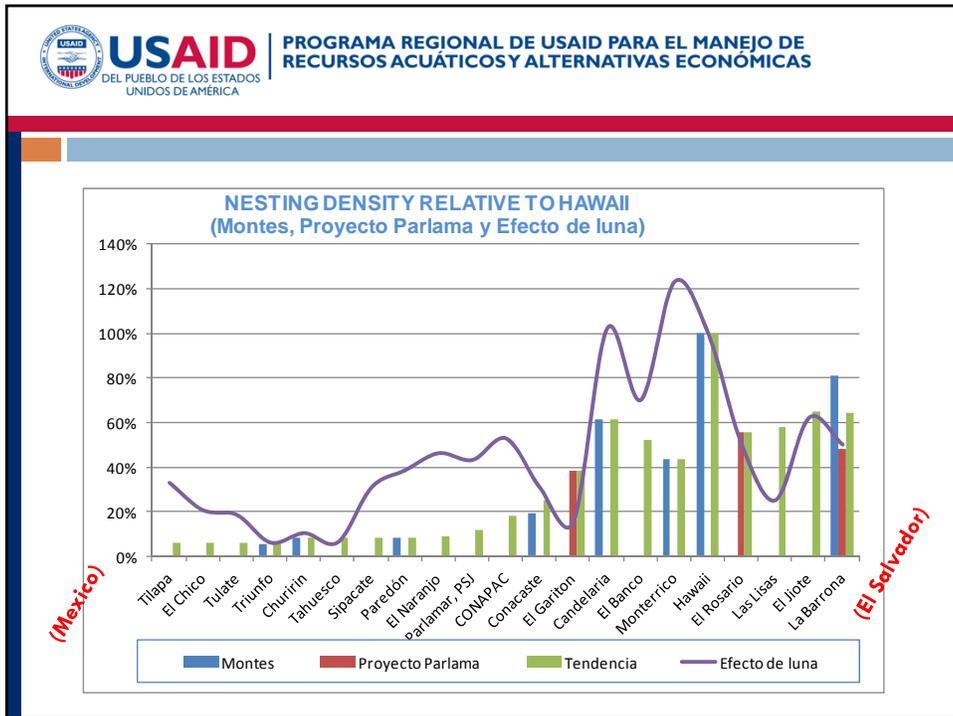
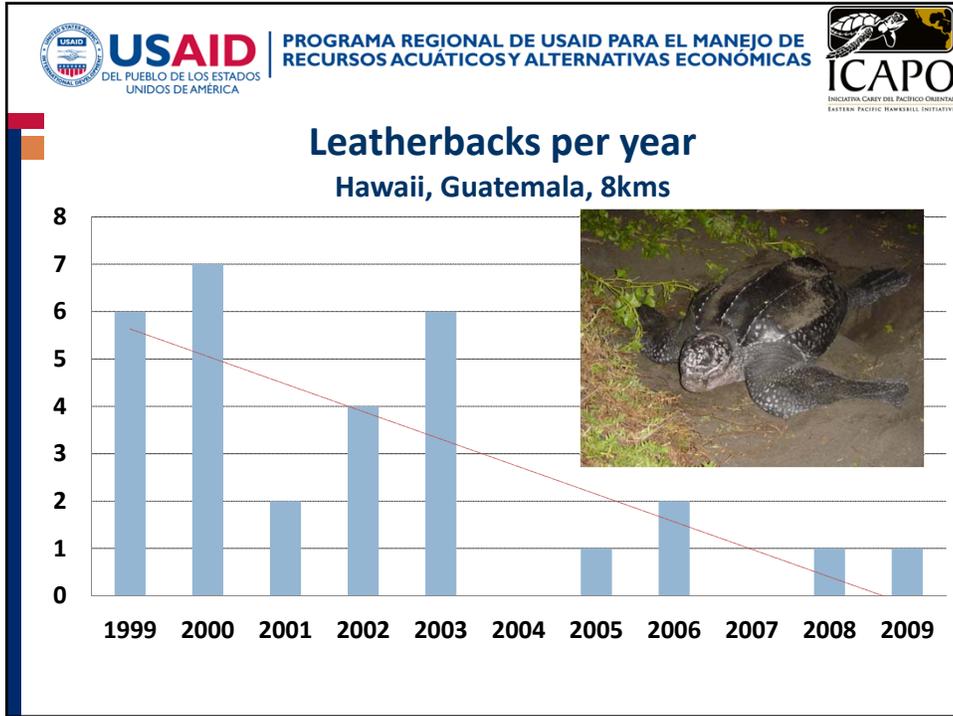
Shifting habitat?

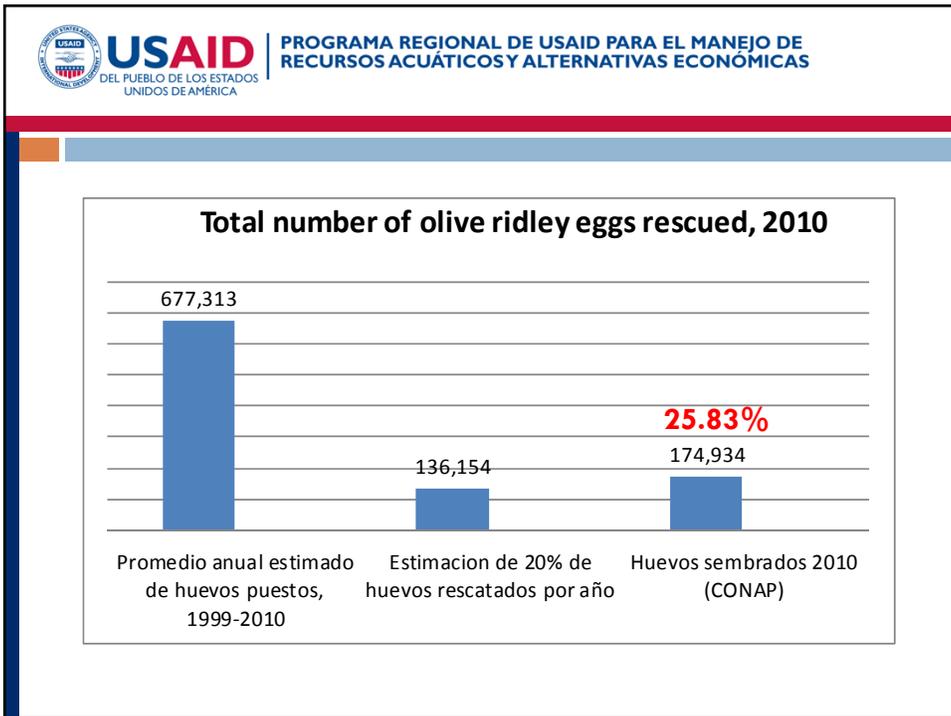
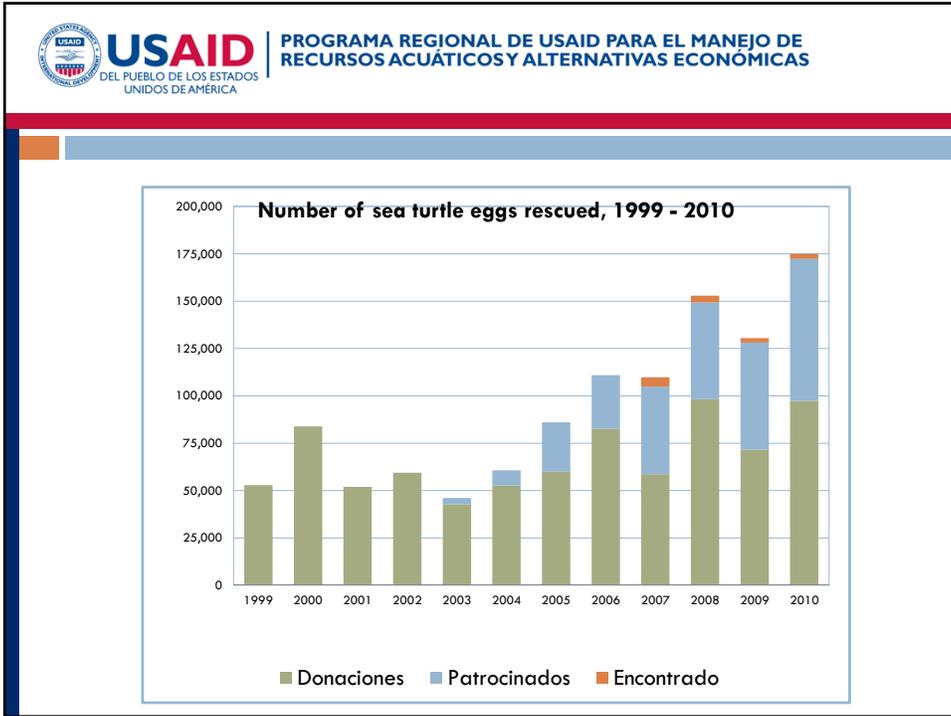
La Barrona, Scott Handy, Akazul













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## TOTAL PRODUCTION, ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

An estimated 673,304 olive ridley eggs are laid each year on the Pacific coast of Guatemala with a beach or wholesale value of Q1,124, 869 or \$148.007, much lower than previous estimates.



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## SUMMARY FINDINGS

- Although they are essential in order to support the donation system, most sea turtle hatcheries in Guatemala lack the human, technical and logistical resources necessary to incubate eggs and collect data in a scientific manner, and few take full advantage of the hatchery's potential as an environmental education tool.
- There are significant gaps in hatchery coverage
- No evidence of significant use of meat, shells or other parts.
- There exists legal ambiguity regarding the donation system given the fact that it has no legislative foundation and the few measures of control that exist are informal.
- This exception to the IAC needs to be justified with a Management Plan
- Although not perfect, the majority of sea turtle conservationists in Guatemala want to continue with the donation system, and work with it through increased private sector sponsorship to increase the rescue rate.

# GRACIAS!!!



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