

- 1996 Annual General Meeting -
**Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network
(WIDECAST)**

"Seabrook Room"
Hilton Head Beach and Tennis Resort
Hilton Head Island, South Carolina USA
26-27 February 1996

MINUTES

WIDECAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**HILTON HEAD ISLAND
SOUTH CAROLINA (USA)**

26-27 FEBRUARY 1996

**Dr. Karen L. Eckert
Executive Director
WIDECAST**

**Dr. Julia Horrocks
Secretary, 1996 Annual Meeting
WIDECAST Country Coordinator, Barbados**

March 1996

WIDECAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: MINUTES

“Seabrook Room”
Hilton Head Beach and Tennis Resort
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WIDECAST Team Members Present: Lic. Anny Chaves (Costa Rica), Dr. Karen Eckert (USA), Lic. Hedelvy Guada (Venezuela), Dr. Julia Horrocks (Barbados), Dr. Jim Richardson (USA).

WIDECAST Country Coordinators Present: Diego Amorocho (Colombia), Tom Barmes (Aruba), Rafe Boulon (U. S. Virgin Islands), Kenneth Fournillier (Trinidad), Lenita Joseph (for Crispin d'Auvergne, St. Lucia), Rhema Kerr (Jamaica), Maria 'Neca' Marcovaldi (Brazil), Maria Mercedes Løpez (Guatemala), Henri Reichart (Suriname).

Observers Present: Denis Castro (Miskito Coast Protected Area, Nicaragua), Gárman Dominici (ProNatura, Dominican Republic), Vincent Vera (ProFauna, Venezuela), Mike Evans (Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge, U. S. Virgin Islands), Alejandro Arenas M. (Parque Xcaret, Mexico), Dr. Yaa Ntianda-Baidu University of Ghana), B. Y. Ofori-Frimpong (Wildlife Department, Ghana), Asha Ali Khatib (Commission for Land and Environment, Zanzibar), Jane Rowena Mbendo Fisheries Department, Kenya), E. K. Nareshwar (Centre for Environment Education, India), Brendan Godley (University of Glasgow, Scotland), Marydele Donnelly (IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group), Dr. Paul Robertson Caribbean Conservation Corporation), Fred Berry (IOCARIBE), Cynthia Lagueux University of Florida), Charles Tambiah (Ocean Initiative), Wilma Katz Manasota Key Sea Turtle Patrol). A few others, including Ana Barragan (UNAM, Mexico) and Colin Limpus (Qld. Dept. Environment and Heritage, Australia) attended selected sessions.

ON 26 FEBRUARY, breakfast was catered to the Seabrook Room at 8:15 am. The Meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Karen Eckert, Executive Director. Karen Eckert welcomed Meeting participants, each of whom was introduced in turn. The WIDECAST roster was circulated and participants were asked to make any necessary corrections. In keeping with recommendations put forward by the 1995 Annual General Meeting, the roster includes tel/fax/ email numbers, as well as addresses in order to facilitate communication within the network. It was noted that an increasing number of network members are using email, but reliable access is lacking in many areas.

Julia Horrocks volunteered to serve as Meeting Secretary. Karen Eckert welcomed two new Country Coordinators: María Mercedes López-Selva (Guatemala) and Diego Amorocho (Colombia). She also noted that nominations had been put forward for new Country Coordinators in Nicaragua (Dr. Gustavo Ruiz has resigned due to other commitments), the Netherlands Antilles (Jeffrey Sybesma has resigned due to a change in employment, taking him away from sea turtles), and Trinidad & Tobago (where a Tobago "island coordinator" to serve with Ken Fournillier has been identified). [These nominations have now been confirmed, and are reflected on the new roster. We welcome our new members! ~ Karen]

Karen Eckert presented an overview of the structure and major objectives of the WIDECAST network, as well as our role as a Partner Organization of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the Wider Caribbean region. She then summarized activities

undertaken with the support of the UNEP office in Kingston, Jamaica (thanks largely to a grant by the U. S. State Department which was awarded to UNEP and earmarked for WIDECAST). These activities were:

- (i) Design a full-color brochure, "Sea Turtles in St. Lucia";
- (ii) Design, print and distribute 10,000 two-color brochures, "Turtuga di Kursou, Antia Ulandes" (Sea Turtles of Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles), in Papiamentu;
- (iii) Design, print, distribute 10,000 species identification leaflets, "Caribische Zeeschildpadden" (Sea Turtles of the Caribbean) in Dutch;
- (iv) Design, print, distribute 9,000 three-color bumper stickers, "Help Us Survive! Watch Where You Drive!", to avert driving on nesting beaches;
- (v) Organize and implement a field training seminar at Matura Bay, Trinidad, site of the largest leatherback nesting colony in the West Indies; topics to include beach patrol, nest protection, data collection and analysis, fund raising, tagging, and village-based ecotourism;
- (vi) Design two full-color posters with regional sea turtle conservation themes;
- (vii) Create a 40-60 image slide show, "Sea Turtles of the Wider Caribbean", to include written narration suitable for presentation to public schools, fishing groups, and civic organizations throughout the region; and
- (viii) Prepare a Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan for Jamaica (review stage draft), including comprehensive discussions of biology, contemporary threats, and recommended conservation action.

Notes: The bumper sticker was printed thanks to a grant from Sun Development Company (Aruba). Printing of the Dutch species identification leaflet will be sponsored by the Sea Turtle Club Bonaire (with a grant from WWF). [The English language leaflets were reprinted in 1995, thanks to a grant from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and they are available upon request. ~ *Karen*] Tim Nokes, a Canadian artist, is donating his time and talent to design the color posters. Meeting participants were urged to think about sea turtle conservation slogans for the posters. Ideas should be forwarded as soon as possible to Karen Eckert's office. Karen Eckert also noted that the slide show was not yet complete and would be circulated to interested Country Coordinators for comment/critique before it was finalized. Monies are being sought to cover the cost of duplicating the show for all Country Coordinators.

A grant was also awarded to WIDECAST in 1995 by the U. S. National Marine Fisheries Service. This money was earmarked for Karen Eckert's salary, largely in compensation for time expended in assisting WIDECAST networks in Trinidad & Tobago and in Jamaica to prepare national Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plans. The grant meant that the Executive Director only had to donate about one-third of her time to WIDECAST this year, the other two-thirds being salaried by this grant. The Action Plans for Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica are now virtually complete, and are due to be submitted to UNEP in final draft by May 1996. Karen Eckert ended her 1995 overview by noting that, aside from producing a variety of educational materials (all requested by the network and described above) and putting a lot of effort into STRAPs for Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica, her office had engaged in numerous other activities in 1995. Some of these activities were:

Meetings and conferences: Sea Turtle Recovery Network of Jamaica ("WIDECAST-Jamaica") convened a national Sea Turtle Symposium -- please take note of our very lovely Annual Meeting folders! -- in October which was attended by a large number of community groups, government officials, fishermen, conservationists and other stakeholders. The Symposium featured keynote speeches by Ministers and other senior officials, as well as by UNEP and

WIDECAST. Lengthy and meaningful discussions were held with the audience on a variety of sea turtle management issues. Symposium recommendations will be included in the STRAP. Less formal but equally useful local strategy sessions and interagency meetings were held in more than a dozen nations, particularly in those with STRAPs already published or nearly completed;

Informal training opportunities and exchanges: for example, a BVI delegation, including a member of Parliament, officers of the Conservation and Fisheries Department, and a turtle hunter, spent a week in Trinidad studying community-based conservation and ecotourism initiatives; Country Coordinators from Barbados and Venezuela spent a week in Trinidad assisting with the deployment of satellite units on leatherbacks nesting at Matura Beach; Jim Richardson, a member of WIDECAST's "regional recovery team", spent a week in Jamaica to participate in the national Sea Turtle Conference and then taught a three-day field seminar on hawksbill ecology at an offshore cay (the workshop was attended by members of the fishing community, Peace Corps, Fisheries Department, Coast Guard, Natural Resource Conservation Authority, and others);

Formal training opportunities: WIDECAST scheduled a week-long training course on hawksbill ecology and population structure in Antigua for biologists from Jamaica and Cuba, but this had to be cancelled due to Hurricane Luis; WIDECAST financially supported two training courses, one in Venezuela and one in Costa Rica, and in the latter case we sponsored the participation of one of our Country Coordinators (María Mercedes López, Guatemala);

Community development: Charles Tambiah spent several weeks in Trinidad and in Jamaica working with communities (the focus being to bring selected coastal communities "up to speed" with regard to sea turtle conservation and their role in implementing the STRAP), presenting workshops on conflict resolution, and responding to a wide variety of requests from communities for information about turtles, and for support in developing (or improving) their skills in tour guiding, proposal writing, public speaking, collaboration with other communities, etc.;

Representation at regional meetings: the Executive Director was invited by UNEP to attend the Third Meeting of the Interim Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee to the SPAW Protocol in Jamaica [At the request of two Government Delegates, I gave a presentation on WIDECAST to this Meeting. ~ *Karen*]; Julia Horrocks put forth some WIDECAST project ideas (e.g., ecotourism studies) at a GEF Regional Meeting in Barbados; Nature Seekers Inc. (an organizational member of the WIDECAST Network in Trinidad) won the Caribbean Conservation Association's "Conservation Award" in 1995;

Finally, the Executive Director responded to hundreds of requests from the Region for technical assistance, educational materials, advocacy support, literature, training opportunities, fund raising, etc.

Rhema Kerr, Country Coordinator in Jamaica, addressed the Meeting and summarized activities undertaken by the WIDECAST network in Jamaica as a result of a grant awarded by the Jamaica Environment Foundation. Activities included the first-ever intensive survey of the south coast and offshore islands, May to November; a professional consultant (Dr. Ann Sutton) was hired to assist with drafting the STRAP; data analysis and a literature search of historical references were undertaken for the STRAP; a field workshop was convened for Fisheries staff, Coast Guard, etc. (see above); and a poster was designed and printed.

Ken Fournillier, Country Coordinator in Trinidad & Tobago, addressed the Meeting and summarized activities undertaken by the WIDECAST network in his country. These included continuing field surveys, community meetings and information exchange, interagency meetings,

media events (press releases, TV spots), assistance with TED workshops and enforcement, collating nesting and stranding data, identifying an Island Coordinator in Tobago, and hosting a number of foreign colleagues who assisted in emphasizing the importance of the leatherback nesting beaches on the east and north coasts. Both Rhema and Ken noted that tagging was important to their respective programs and that WIDECAST should consider sponsoring a tagging workshop and organizing a regional database [for more discussion, see Tuesday morning's "Open Forum"].

Charles Tambiah, a doctoral candidate at the University of California at Berkeley, addressed the Meeting and described two lengthy visits, each several weeks long, to Trinidad and Jamaica during the summer of 1995. The site visits were organized in response to Country Coordinator requests for WIDECAST assistance in the areas of conflict resolution (among stakeholders) and community development. There was a great deal of interest on the part of Meeting participants in the successful campaigns in both countries, and a request that WIDECAST consider offering a regional workshop on these topics so that more countries could take advantage of Charles' expertise. It was noted that while no two situations are alike, there are general guidelines to follow in conflict resolution and a workshop on this topic would be useful. In closing this session, Karen Eckert asked all Meeting participants to read the Progress Report submitted to UNEP in August 1995 for additional insight into network accomplishments during the first half of 1995. The Report was included in the Meeting packet.

11:00 - 11:30 am Coffee Break

The next order of business was a summary of fund raising in 1995 and its potential for 1996. International and national government sources were discussed, as well as sources of support from private entities (foundations, scholarships) and fund raising campaigns ("Walk for Turtles", retail sales). Karen Eckert noted that WIDECAST was working closely with representatives of the European Union to secure funds for nation-by-nation STRAP implementation. With an aim to strengthen fund raising in the region, Marydele Donnelly, IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, asked that WIDECAST keep track each time a sea turtle project receives international funding (e.g., from the GEF Small Grants Fund).

In a discussion of "Unfinished Business", Karen Eckert noted that the ecotourism manual was stalled due to lack of funding. The regional guidelines for the conservation of sea turtles (requested by UNEP) will likely be published later this year, having been reviewed and approved by the SPAW Meeting last October. Both documents were reviewed at the 1994 WIDECAST Annual General Meeting.

The "Open Forum" session provided an opportunity for comment by several Meeting participants. Hedelvy Guada and Anny Chaves offered to translate existing English-language materials, such as the WIDECAST brochure, into Spanish.

Lenita Joseph informed the Meeting of a sea turtle moratorium passed in December which will provide full protection to sea turtles as of March 1996. The legislation was passed as a result of increased awareness on the part of conservation groups and policy-makers regarding the imperiled status of sea turtles in St. Lucia; this awareness was generated during two years of WIDECAST assistance in drafting a STRAP for St. Lucia. The Meeting offered congratulations to the Government of St. Lucia for promoting a conservation stance. Note was made of the vital need to prepare fishing and retail communities for sea turtle bans in order to gain maximum support for the new legislation, and for sea turtle conservation in general.

The Meeting recommended that a standard Press Release be drafted to accompany the publication and distribution of STRAPs. The need to educate Government personnel, as well as NGOs, was noted.

María Mercedes López, Country Coordinator in Guatemala, addressed the Meeting and gave a brief description of sea turtle activities in her country. She reported that 18 government-sponsored hatcheries (Pacific coast) are using outdated techniques and that assistance is needed in modernizing hatchery practices in Guatemala. Hatchery projects have historically been assisted by Peace Corps volunteers. In most cases the eggs are collected from fishermen who agree to donate one dozen eggs from each clutch to the hatchery. Recently, Earth Island Institute's Central American Coordinator has been offering advice and this has been useful. María gained a great deal of knowledge from the sea turtle course she attended in Costa Rica in January, and this information has also been useful within the country. She also reported to the Meeting that shrimp trawlers continue to kill turtles offshore. It was a recommendation of the meeting that a training course for hatchery personnel be a priority for WIDECAST in 1996. The Executive Director promised to enquire about funding from the Peace Corps Office in Washington D. C.

Jane Mbendo, Kenya Fisheries Department, described the sea turtle situation in Kenya. An innovative initiative, which involves many km of coastline, emphasizes the involvement of fishermen in sea turtle conservation. One example of involvement is a program that pays fishermen US\$ 10 for discovering a nest, \$10 for protecting it during incubation, and a few cents for each hatchling successfully reaching the sea. The records are kept and money dispensed from a network of local participants, such as coastal hotels and other establishments close to sea turtle nesting beaches. The goal is to move away from this system of payment to more long term assistance to rural communities. With this in mind, creative solutions are being sought to meet fundamental needs (e.g., ice, water, school supplies) within coastal communities. The hope is that by meeting these needs, the standard of living in rural areas may rise to a level where sea turtles are no longer threatened by hungry residents. Jane mentioned that she had gained valuable insight into a variety of conservation options from attending the WIDECAST Meeting.

Karen Eckert closed the morning session with an announcement that the Columbus Zoo (Ohio, USA) had approached WIDECAST with the idea of creating a "Columbus Zoo Chelonia Fund". The fund is envisaged to start small (US\$ 3000/yr) and serve as a small grants fund for WIDECAST network participants. The money is collected by the Zoo each year from coins visitors throw in the turtle pond. A lively discussion ensued. Topics included: the amount of individual awards, proposal deadline(s), criteria for funding, and evaluation. A discussion of ways to augment the fund (such as by getting other zoos and aquaria to join) proved very useful. The Executive Director agreed to circulate draft guidelines to Country Coordinators for comment. The Meeting expressed its hope that the first funds could be made available in 1996.

1:00 - 2:00 pm Lunch

The afternoon session was devoted to a discussion of large-scale commercial tourist development -- in both cases touted as 'ecotourism' -- at major nesting beaches on the east coasts of St. Lucia and Trinidad. It is unfortunate that the success of 'ecotourism' and its publicity is attracting the wrong kinds of development to sensitive areas, such as sea turtle nesting beaches. In the case of St. Lucia, Lenita Joseph explained that the threat was foreign investment at Grande Anse Estate, the most important leatherback nesting beach in St. Lucia. National planning had been well underway with an aim toward designating the Estate as a protected area when a New York developer allegedly purchased the site. In the case of Trinidad, a local developer with an

established record of ill-conceived hotel development on Tobago purchased several hundred acres adjoining Matura Bay Beach, one of the most important leatherback nesting beaches in the Wider Caribbean Region. Ken Fournillier explained the history of this case, including a turn for the worse with the election of a pro-development Government late last year. After hearing both of these presentations, the Meeting agreed that the situations were severe and that letters should be sent to both Governments expressing concern that proposed development plans had the potential to seriously and negatively affect sea turtle nesting. A Task Force was asked to draft wording for the consideration of the Meeting on Tuesday.

5:00 pm Adjourn

After the Meeting adjourned, a 5-member Task Force worked until 6:30 pm drafting letters for the consideration of the Meeting.

ON 27 FEBRUARY, breakfast was catered to the Seabrook Room at 8:15 am. The Meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Karen Eckert, Executive Director. Karen Eckert welcomed new Meeting participants, each of whom was introduced in turn.

The Executive Director drew attention to a number of new publications, picked at random from her files, to emphasize that Country Coordinators should be keeping up with the latest technical reports on subjects ranging from TEDs to conservation and genetics to mariculture. All these topics are of vital concern to the Wider Caribbean Region. The Marine Turtle Newsletter announces new publications as soon as the newsletter is made aware of them. An ordering address is always provided, and in virtually all cases publications are available free of charge.

The publications she displayed were:

BALAZS, G. H., S. G. POOLEY and S. K. K. MURAKAWA. 1995. Guidelines for Handling Marine Turtles Hooked or Entangled in the Hawaii Longline Fishery. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-SWFSC-222. 41 pp. Available from: NMFS/SWFSC (Attn: Publications Officer), Honolulu Lab., 2570 Dole Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822-2396 USA.

BOWEN, B. W. and J. C. AVISE. 1995. Conservation genetics of marine turtles, p.190-237. In: J. C. Avise and J. L. Hamrick (Editors), Conservation Genetics: Case Histories from Nature. Chapman and Hall, New York. Available from: B. Bowen, BEECS Genetics Analysis Core, Univ. Florida, 12085 Research Drive, Alachua, Florida 32615 USA.

DONNELLY, M. 1994. Sea Turtle Mariculture: A Review of Relevant Information for Conservation and Commerce. Center for Marine Conservation, Washington D. C. 113 pp. Available from: Ctr for Marine Conservation, 1725 DeSales Street NW, Washington D. C. 20036 USA.

HEPPELL, S. S., L. B. CROWDER and J. PRIDDY. 1995. Evaluation of a Fisheries Model for the Harvest of Hawksbill Sea Turtles, *Eretmochelys imbricata*, in Cuba. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-OPR-5. U. S. Dept. Commerce. 48 pp. Available from: S. Heppell, Duke Univ. School of the Environment, 135 Duke Marine Lab Road, Beaufort, North Carolina 28517 USA.

MITCHELL, J. F., J. W. WATSON, D. G. FOSTER and R. E. CAYLOR. 1995. The Turtle Excluder Device (TED): A Guide to Better Performance. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-SEFSC-366. U.S. Dept. Commerce. 35 pp. Available from: Natl. Marine Fisheries Service, Mississippi Lab., Pascagoula Facility, P. O. Drawer 1207, Pascagoula, Mississippi 39568-1207 USA.

MTSG. 1995. A Global Strategy for the Conservation of Marine Turtles. Prepared by the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group. 24 pp. Available from: M. Donnelly, IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group, 1725 DeSales Street NW, Washington D. C. 20036 USA. (Available in English and Spanish)

WEBER, M., D. CROUSE, R. IRVIN and S. IUDICELLO. 1995. Delay and Denial: A Political History of Sea Turtles and Shrimp Fishing. Center for Marine Conservation, Washington D. C. 46 pp. Available from: Center for Marine Conservation, 1725 DeSales Street NW, Washington D. C. 20036.

The Executive Director also drew attention brochures (which were made available to the Meeting) from a variety of organizations which provide videos, posters, informational brochures and other items of sea turtle interest. Meeting packets also featured two posters, one the result of collaboration between WIDECAST and the Sea Turtle Club Bonaire and the other a promotional poster created for the CITES Treaty Support Fund in the U. S. The CITES poster features Caribbean sea turtles and has been distributed to CITES Management Authority offices throughout the Wider Caribbean. A list of CITES offices was circulated; WIDECAST members were encouraged to make contact with their CITES office and offer to assist in distributing the posters. (Let's not allow them to "sit on the shelf!")

Continuing on the subject of public awareness, the Executive Director reminded Country Coordinators to alert her if they were able to attend important regional or global meetings. Displays of WIDECAST materials at international gatherings greatly assist the network in gaining visibility and attracting funding. Julia Horrocks indicated that she may be attending the IUCN Congress in Montreal in 1996 and she would be willing to bring WIDECAST materials for display and distribution.

Neca Marcovaldi shared a variety of environmental education and promotional materials developed by the TAMAR program in Brazil. These items are marketed throughout Brazil and generate important income for sea turtle conservation projects. The Meeting was especially impressed with a compact disc (CD) featuring the biology and conservation of Brazilian sea turtles, as well as information about the structure and objectives of the TAMAR program. Neca emphasized to the Meeting that all sea turtle projects should strive to be self-supporting. Funding is scarce and will continue to be so. She suggested that the proposed Columbus Zoo Chelonia Fund put priority on providing seed money to income-generating projects.

The primary topic for the morning session was entitled "Institution Building." The Executive Director noted that without strengthening the structure of the network, including legally incorporating WIDECAST in the U. S. and establishing more formal relationships with Lead Organizations in individual Caribbean countries (or incorporating local WIDECAST networks), it will not be possible for the network to secure the financial resources needed to actively support sea turtle conservation throughout the region and seriously pursue STRAP implementation on a nation-by-nation basis. She indicated that several Country Coordinators had suggested to her that the role of "Lead Organizations" in-country be strengthened and their relationship to the regional

WIDECAST project be clarified so as to serve, among other things, as a conduit for conservation funding. The Meeting was opened for discussion.

Rhema Kerr stated that she had been giving this issue a lot of thought relative to Jamaica - 1995 was an active and very successful year for WIDECAST in Jamaica, but future efforts would be even more successful if the Sea Turtle Recovery Network (STRN) in Jamaica had a more formal structure and could respond to and advocate for issues as a body. A STRN newsletter is published periodically and this has been very useful. As STRAP implementation will require a coordinated national effort (in Jamaica and elsewhere), the stage should be set in each country to ensure that there is a mechanism for coordination and for action. This cannot rest on the shoulders of the Country Coordinator alone. Moreover, structure and organization lend strength to fund raising efforts. Rhema proposed that WIDECAST design a standard "Letter of Agreement" for Country Coordinators and Lead Organizations. Such a letter would both clarify the relationships between various components of the WIDECAST network and lend prestige to local groups who can show that they are formally affiliated with WIDECAST. It would also assist Country Coordinators in their task of assembling and maintaining a national network if stationery and other amenities were provided.

The Meeting agreed that Country Coordinators should contact the Executive Director on an individual basis (and as soon as possible) with a proposed structure for WIDECAST in their country. The proposal should include either designating an existing NGO to be the Lead Organization for WIDECAST (i.e., to channel funds, to be a strong player in advocating for STRAP implementation, and ideally to provide phone, photocopying, and other office services) or forming a new organization to serve this purpose. The latter option heightens WIDECAST's profile, but it's also a lot of work to form an organization, elect officers, maintain proper accounting, etc. In either case, some background information on the proposed Lead Organization should be provided (e.g., descriptive brochure, bylaws, recent annual report), as well as a letter from the organization indicating that it is willing to serve as the Lead Organization for WIDECAST in the country.

The Executive Director agreed to draft a provisional Letter of Agreement, both for the position of Country Coordinator and for the role of Lead Organization, and circulate these to a Task Force for review. It was suggested that the regional WIDECAST Recovery Team review and ratify nominations for Lead Organizations, just as is presently done for Country Coordinators. It was further suggested that Letters of Agreement be reviewed at regular intervals (on a 2-3 year basis?) to allow renegotiation if necessary.

The discussion led to the topic of subregional offices, and how the WIDECAST network can best be served as time goes on. The needs of the network, and of sea turtle conservation in general, are multiplying exponentially. In order to be effective, we must meet the challenges of public education, fund raising, lobbying and training. The Executive Director noted that there had long been a need for a Latin American Office to take the lead in promoting correspondence and communication among Spanish-speaking Country Coordinators, and to take responsibility for editing and finalizing the Spanish language STRAPs. She further noted that she was exploring the potential of establishing an Eastern Caribbean office in the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme office complex in Kingston, Jamaica.

"Thematic posts" were also discussed, such as an Education Office to stock and distribute WIDECAST educational materials, a Community Development Office (established by someone like Charles Tambiah and dedicated to strengthening community participation throughout the Wider Caribbean, offering conflict resolution training, and increasing the effectiveness of sea turtle conservation at the grassroots level), and a Marketing Office (responsible for developing retail

products to raise money for sea turtle conservation projects). The Executive Director asked all participants to think seriously about these ideas, and about how our network might be better organized to promote the cause of sea turtle research and conservation throughout the region.

The topic of email was brought up as a way to inexpensively increase communication throughout the WIDECAST network. The suggestion was made that we might tap the new Columbus Zoo Chelonia Fund for seed money on behalf of Country Coordinators who do not have the resources to purchase a modem. The Executive Director promised to contact UNEP and ask for support in getting all the WIDECAST Country Coordinators "on line."

10:30 - 11:00 am Coffee Break

Meeting participants were asked to review the letters drafted to the Governments of Trinidad & Tobago and St. Lucia. The drafts were accepted with minor revision. It was decided that the St. Lucia letter should reference the new moratorium, which includes wording about not interfering with nesting. It was decided that the length of individual "Whereas" clauses should be reduced in the Trinidad letter. It was decided that each Country Coordinator present at the Meeting would sign the letter as the WIDECAST Country Coordinator in their respective country, and that the Executive Director should forward the letters to the respective Prime Ministers (and other Ministers identified by Lenita Joseph and Ken Fournillier). It was further decided that individuals and local groups should be encouraged to write additional letters to both Governments concerning the serious issues raised by commercial development of Matura Bay and Grande Anse Estate.

The balance of time before the Lunch break was devoted to an "Open Forum" session. A variety of topics were discussed. Henri Reichart asked if anyone had experience surveying beaches using "ultra-light" aircraft. Henri would like to pursue this option for surveying the coast of Suriname. The cost was discussed, and the suggestion made that an ad in a trade magazine may result in the donation of an aircraft and/or a pilot. The Executive Director promised to provide Country Coordinators with information about "LightHawk", a private foundation in the U. S. specializing in aerial surveys for conservation purposes. Mention was made of the fact that ultra-lights can be very dangerous to pilot and insurance can be difficult to obtain.

Tom Barmes asked if WIDECAST could develop an "appreciation certificate" to give to individuals, businesses, or groups making significant contributions to sea turtle conservation locally. The Meeting agreed that this was a great idea. Paul Robertson (Caribbean Conservation Corporation) reported to the Meeting that he had found an excellent translation program that enabled computers to translate Spanish documents into English. The program ("Spanish Assistant") is available for about US\$ 40.00.

The Executive Director gave copies of a children's book ("Leatherback Turtle") to the African Observers at the Meeting and, on behalf of the Meeting, thanked them for sharing their experiences and wished them an enjoyable week at the symposium. The Observers emphasized how valuable the WIDECAST Meeting had been for them. In particular, Jane Mbendo promised to carry what she had learned about the WIDECAST program back home to her colleagues who were seeking to establish an effective regional sea turtle conservation initiative in the Western Indian Ocean.

Some Country Coordinators asked if additional copies of the "Leatherback Turtle" book could be made available. Karen Eckert reported that WIDECAST had purchased the last 500 of

these books from the publisher and that 100 each had been donated to public awareness campaigns in three Caribbean islands hosting significant leatherback populations (St. Lucia, Trinidad, St. Croix). The publisher had indicated that a reprinting was not being considered. Paul Robertson offered to include the book in the CCC catalog and he suggested that if other conservation groups did the same, perhaps the publisher would see there was a market and consider a reprinting. The Executive Director promised to look into this.

Several Country Coordinators wondered if it were possible for WIDECAST to establish or sponsor a central tagging database. The Meeting agreed that there was a need for standardization in tagging methodology and record-keeping, as well as a need to compile data on a regional basis. Jim Richardson remarked that the Jumby Bay (Antigua) hawksbill project had designed a record-keeping book which could be duplicated for other projects. The Executive Director reported that Dr. Jeremy Woodley (Centre for Marine Sciences, UWI Mona, Jamaica) had made an offer to WIDECAST to maintain a centralized tag registry for the Eastern Caribbean. The Centre already maintains several marine databases and has the staff to provide this service. Anny Chaves promised to investigate the possibility that the Costa Rican tag registry, established to serve the Eastern Pacific, might be expanded to serve Caribbean Latin America. The Meeting agreed that the Executive Director should explore all options and identify a suitable host institution for such databases. The Meeting further agreed that a tagging workshop should be convened, standard data sheets and record-keeping books should be developed, etc.

12:00 - 2:00 pm Lunch

During the Lunch Break (12:30 - 2:00 pm), Karen Eckert met with Latin American Country Coordinators to discuss mechanisms to strengthen the Latin American component of the WIDECAST network, enhance information exchange among Latin American Country Coordinators, and increase the speed at which Latin American STRAPs are readied for publication.

The afternoon session began with a half-hour viewing of the TAMAR CD-ROM devoted to sea turtles and their conservation in Brazil. Despite technical problems (the computer on hand was not powerful enough to do the program justice), it was fantastic to glimpse the beauty of the presentation and the depth of information available. The Meeting thanked Neca Marcovaldi for sharing the CD-ROM, and her other promotional materials.

The afternoon session formally opened at 2:30 with the first of a series of invited presentations. Marydele Donnelly (Program Officer, IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specials Group) gave an overview of the "Western Hemisphere Sea Turtle Convention", now making its way through negotiations. This treaty could have important implications for sea turtle conservation in the region, or it could degenerate into a weak instrument with little constructive support. The need for the treaty emerged from a law passed in the U. S. in 1989 which dictates that the U. S. government ban the import of shrimp caught in countries where shrimp trawlers are not required to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs). Initially the U. S. sought to forge an international agreement requiring that TEDs be used whenever trawls operate in waters where turtles occur (sea turtles often drown when caught by trawlers and in some countries this is the largest single source of mortality). The treaty, however, is broader than the TED issue and addresses a number of sea turtle conservation issues. Marydele asked all Country Coordinators to keep abreast of the progress of this treaty and to lobby their governments to support a strong instrument.

Anna Bass (BEECS Genetic Analysis Core, Florida) spoke on the "Genetic Population Structure of Caribbean Hawksbills." She expressed gratitude for the invaluable support of the WIDECAST network in collecting the samples obtained to date, and emphasized the importance of continuing to build the genetic information database. Hawksbills travel widely and do not generally reside in the countries where they nest. Genetic analysis allows us to positively link foraging and nesting aggregations with one another. Such information is crucial to the conservation of hawksbills throughout the region, and especially to any accurate evaluation of ranching proposals which seem certain to emerge following passage of Marine Turtle Ranching Guidelines by CITES Parties in 1994. [Please refer to last year's Meeting Minutes, and to the April 1995 issue of the Marine Turtle Newsletter. ~ Karen] Anna talked about the difficulty of obtaining population samples from this heavily exploited species, especially in areas where populations are very low. She requested the continuing support of the network in this important research. She emphasized that all information is shared with relevant government and NGO participants, and that nothing is done without proper permits.

Fred Berry (IOCARIBE) updated the Meeting on the status of the Third Western Atlantic Turtle Symposium -- "WATS III". The first WATS was held in Costa Rica in 1983; the second in Puerto Rico in 1987. At the time there was strong support from the region to convene a follow-up conference in the early 1990's. Sponsoring organizations, including IOCARIBE (Colombia), are now planning to make WATS III a reality. When this issue was discussed at the 1995 WIDECAST Annual General Meeting there was support for the idea, with the caveat that the agenda be comprehensive and meaningful. [Please refer to last year's Meeting Minutes. ~ Karen] An Executive Committee and Steering Committee have now been formed to establish just such an agenda, and it has been proposed that the Symposium be held in 1998 coincident with a "Year of the Sea Turtle" campaign in the Wider Caribbean region. There was general agreement from the Meeting that a regional Symposium would be very useful, and that the WIDECAST network should be integral to its planning and presentation. The Executive Director suggested that a provisional agenda (when one is available) be circulated to WIDECAST Country Coordinators for input.

Dr. Sylvia Galloway (U. S. National Marine Fisheries Service) gave an informative summary of sea turtle forensic science. There are many uses for laboratory forensic techniques in the conservation of sea turtles, and especially in prosecuting people who violate conservation laws. Using handouts and illustrative examples, Dr. Galloway described the various facets of forensic science, the types of samples that might be collected, and the analyses her lab is capable of performing. She encouraged the WIDECAST network to make use of the laboratory's capabilities, and noted that forensic services are provided free of charge. For more information or for assistance in processing a specific sample, please feel free to contact Dr. Galloway at: National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Charleston Laboratory, P. O. Box 12607, Charleston, South Carolina 29422; Tel (803) 762-8500, Fax (803) 762-8700.

The last half-hour of the day was devoted to "Open Forum". Several topics were briefly discussed. There was consensus that the Meeting had been extremely useful to the participants, as well as to the Observers. The Executive Director was warmly thanked for her role in convening the Meeting, and she in turn expressed her appreciation to the Network for a great year -- and her expectation that 1996 would be equally productive!

5:00 pm Adjourn

APPENDIX I

List of Participants

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