

MINUTES

WIDECAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DELTA ORLANDO RESORT HOTEL

FLORIDA (USA)

3-4 MARCH 1997

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

**Alexis Suárez
WIDECAST Latin American Program Officer
Secretary, 1997 Annual Meeting**

April 1997

WIDECAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: MINUTES

Delta Orlando Resort Hotel
Orlando, Florida USA
3 - 4 March 1997

Team Members Present: Lic. Ana Chaves Q. (Costa Rica), Dr. Karen Eckert (USA), Lic. Hedelvy Guada (Venezuela), and Dr. James Richardson (USA).

Country Coordinators Present: Diego Amorocho (Colombia), Ralf Boulon (U.S. Virgin Islands), Denis Castro W. (Nicaragua), Kalli De Meyer (Bonaire), Dr. Marie-Louis Felix (for Crispin d'Auvergne, St. Lucia), Rhema Kerr (Jamaica), Maria 'Neca' Marcovaldi (Brazil), Henri Reichart (Suriname), Argelis Ruiz-Guevara (Panama), Elizabeth Subin (Anguilla), and Lotus Vermeer (for Dr. Julia Horrocks, Barbados).

Observers Present: Rebecca Bell and Kirsten Dahlen (Little Cumberland Island Museum, Georgia), Marydele Donnelly (IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group), Wilma Katz (Manasota Key Sea Turtle Patrol), Amy Mackay (WIDECAST - U.S. Virgin Islands), Samiro Magane (Mozambique), Joe Parsons (Cayman Island Turtle Farm), Berthin Rakotonirina (I.H.S.M., Madagascar), James Rebholz (WIDECAST - St. Croix), Alexis Suarez (WIDECAST - USA), James Tabor (Venezuela), Charles Tambiah (WIDECAST - USA), and Vicente Vera (PROFAUNA, Venezuela). Others, including Paulo Barata (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), Anna Bass (University of Florida), Maura Kraus (Collier County Natural Resources Department, Florida), Dottie Klugel (IUCN/SSC/MTSG), E. K. Naresh (Nehru Foundation for Development, India), Jorge Picon (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Devin Reese (U.S.A.I.D.), Jody Rosier (Florida Audubon Society), and Perran Ross (University of Florida) attended selected sessions [see Appendix I].

On 2 MARCH 1997, breakfast was catered to the Wood Stork Conference Room at 0800 hr. The Meeting was called to order at 0900 hr by Karen Eckert, Executive Director. Karen Eckert welcomed Meeting participants, each of whom introduced themselves in turn. The WIDECAST roster was circulated and participants were asked to make any necessary corrections. Karen Eckert announced that her fax number would soon change to (619) 451-6986. Announcements regarding accommodations, transportation, meals and Sea Turtle Symposium registration followed. Alexis Suarez agreed to act as Meeting Secretary.

Karen Eckert described the following materials, featured in the Meeting packet: Witherington and Martin's Technical Report, "Understanding, Assessing and Resolving Light-Pollution Problems on Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches"; the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (English, Spanish), the Government of Cuba's proposal to transfer Cuban hawksbills (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) from CITES Appendix I to Appendix II (English); *Simbiota* donor resource book; and various bumper stickers, leaflets and brochures. Each participant also received a copy of Earth Island Institute's videotape (English, Spanish) on turtle excluder devices (TEDs).

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 technique to genetics. These topics are of vital concern to the Wider Caribbean Region. She noted that the *Marine Turtle Newsletter* lists new publications quarterly; author addresses are provided. In virtually all cases (except for new books), publications are available from the author or publisher free of charge. The following publications were on display:

CHELONIAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION. *Chelonia Conservation and Biology* 2(2), Special Focus Issue: The Leatherback Turtle.

BOWEN, B. W. and W. N. WITZELL (Editors). 1996. *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation Genetics*. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-SEFSC-396. 173 pp.

MTSG. 1996. *A Strategy for the Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean*. Prepared by the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group. --- pp. Available from: M. Donnelly, IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group, 1725 DeSales Street N.W., Washington D.C. 20036 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).

GEROSA, G. 1996. *Manual on Marine Turtle Tagging in the Mediterranean*. SPA/RAG (UNEP/ MAP). Tunis. 48 pp.

RIPPLE, J. *Sea Turtles* ----

LUTZ, P. (Editor) *Biology of Sea Turtles*, -----

Karen Eckert noted that readers of the *Marine Turtle Newsletter* can purchase the new book, *Biology of Sea Turtles*, at a discounted rate from the distributor, Miami Aquaculture, Inc. Kalli De Meyer (Bonaire) reported that Miami Aquaculture, Inc. (Dan Spotts, President; 4606 SW 74th Ave., Miami, Florida 33155; Fax: (305) 262-6701) had been very supportive in obtaining and delivering various types of technical equipment needed by Bonaire Marine Park staff. She mentioned that the company has a variety of equipment available for purchase and has been quite effective at delivering materials to remote locations throughout the region. She suggested that WIDECASST network members consider contacting Spotts for assistance in the purchase of field or laboratory supplies and equipment.

The Meeting was pleased to hear that Neca Marcovaldi, WIDECASST Country Coordinator in Brazil, received the Getty Award in 1996 for her outstanding achievements in sea turtle conservation in Brazil, as Director and Founder of Fundacao Proyeto TAMAR. In addition, Karen Eckert received a Pew Fellowship in Conservation and the Environment for her "outstanding accomplishments in sea turtle conservation throughout the Wider Caribbean Region", as WIDECASST's Executive Director.

As a follow-up to last year's Annual Meeting, Karen Eckert announced the establishment of a WIDECAST Conservation Materials Distribution Center (CMDC) in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. She introduced Amy Mackay, WIDECAST's new Information Officer, who oversees the office; she described Amy's long-time involvement with WIDECAST and the sea turtles of St. Croix. Amy introduced the office's objectives, and noted that it is co-sponsored by the Friends of Sandy Point [Sandy Point beach is an important local leatherback nesting site]. Amy has negotiated free storage space in a facility well constructed to safeguard WIDECAST's educational materials from humidity, hurricanes, and other elements. The CMDC logbook was circulated among Meeting participants to remind everyone of the variety of WIDECAST materials that are available upon request. Amy's business card was included in the Meeting packet.

Rhema Kerr (Jamaica) suggested that WIDECAST have some type of Golden Circle Award to acknowledge and show our appreciation to folks who help the network achieve its goals throughout the year. The Meeting agreed to consider establishing such a 'circle'. Karen Eckert asked that an individual or committee be nominated to consider the proposal and present options to the network. [Note: No such individual or committee was nominated by Meeting's end; anyone interested in pursuing this excellent idea, please contact Karen Eckert!]

Karen Eckert provided the Meeting with a 1996 Financial Statement. In the past, WIDECAST has been able to secure about US\$ 80,000 - \$100,000 per year (not much for salary, travel, projects, etc. ... but we've survived!), largely from the U.S. Government and UNEP. In recent years, however, political changes in Washington D. C. have meant that fewer conservation dollars are available, especially for international work. Moreover, funding shortfalls within the UNEP Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit (Kingston, Jamaica) have meant a lack of support there, as well. In 1996, WIDECAST took in only about \$33,000. Consequently, Karen only worked half-time for WIDECAST in 1996, and most of that time was as a volunteer. Thanks to the Pew Fellowship, however, most of her salary will be covered for the coming triennium, 1997-1999.

During the tenure of the Pew Fellowship, Karen will focus on institutional building for the network itself; that is, taking action to ensure the continuity of WIDECAST beyond individuals and enhancing the network's capacity to raise funds. The highest priority is to secure nonprofit status for WIDECAST in the U.S. Thanks to publicity surrounding the Pew Fellowship, Baker & McKenzie, a global (San Diego-based) law firm, has offered to do the legal work pro bono to register WIDECAST as a nonprofit organization. Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws will be complete by May 1997. The Meeting expressed pleasure at the prospect of strengthening WIDECAST's ability to channel private, U.S.-based conservation funds into the Region.


MILESTONES

A sampling of the 1996 milestones from the Executive Director's office were as follows:

(i) Five new Country Coordinators joined WIDECAST this year: Kalli De Meyer (Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles), Denis Castro W. (Nicaragua), Diego Amorocho (Colombia), Maria Mercedes López-Selva (Guatemala), and Leon Pors (Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles).

(ii) Two interns assisted WIDECAST's San Diego headquarters this year: Monica Thiele and Alexis Suárez.

(iii) A Certificate of Pride was developed to present to restaurants and shops in the Caribbean who do not use turtle products. This Certificate was partially funded by the CITES Secretariat and \$2,000 is still sought for its completion. It presents the CITES poster as its graphic and is available in both English and Spanish.




This establishment does not buy or sell crafts, gift items, meals, or beverages derived from sea turtles!

Please share our commitment to the conservation and recovery of endangered Caribbean sea turtles by not purchasing sea turtle products at home or abroad.


Please remember it is against international law to transport sea turtle products between countries.

Together we can make a difference!

A message from the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) widecast.org in collaboration with the Conservation Treaty Support Fund, conservationtreaty.org National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, nfwf.org and the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, cep.unep.org



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Este establecimiento no compra o vende artesanías, regalos, comidas o bebidas provenientes de tortugas marinas.

Lo invitamos a comprometerse con nosotros a la conservación y recuperación de las tortugas marinas del Caribe (en peligro de extinción) no comprando en su país ni en el extranjero productos provenientes de tortugas marinas.

Por favor, recuerde que es contrario a las leyes internacionales transportar productos de tortugas marinas entre los países.

¡Juntos hacemos la diferencia!

Un mensaje de la Red para la Conservación de las Tortugas Marinas en el Gran Caribe (WIDECAST) widecast.org con la colaboración de Conservation Treaty Support Fund, conservationtreaty.org National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, nfwf.org y el Programa Ambiental del Caribe del PNUMA, cep.unep.org



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(iv) WIDECAST printed 12,000 sea turtle species identification leaflets, both in English and Spanish and 5,000 bumper stickers each in English and Spanish.

(v) The WIDECAST Anguilla project received a \$15,000 grant from the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service in 1996 to write its Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan, implement its habitat surveys and work with the government on extending the Sea Turtle Moratorium of Anguilla.

(vi) The Columbus Zoo granted a loan to the Anguilla project in the amount of \$365 for the purchase and creation of 100 "Save the Sea Turtles" T-shirts which were sold for US\$ 25 each, generating US\$ 2,500. The Columbus Zoo was reimbursed and the rest of the funds raised were invested in the sea turtle project. (Karen Eckert encouraged proposals to solicit loans from the Columbus Zoo-WIDECAST *Chelonia Small Grants Fund* and reminded Meeting participants of the deadline of March 15, 1997.)

OVERVIEW

Karen Eckert presented the following summary and overview of WIDECAST's recent history:

Milton Kaufmann, WIDECAST's founder, invited Eckert to assume leadership of the fledgling network in 1989. At this time WIDECAST was over \$50,000 in debt, had several delinquent contracts, and a handful of dedicated Country Coordinators. In a few years the debt was cleared, contracts were either negotiated or fulfilled, and the conservation networking effort was in place.

By 1990, Karen Eckert had moved to San Diego where she provided an office at the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service's Southwest Fisheries Science Center. As part of WIDECAST's grassroots efforts throughout the Caribbean, she travelled extensively for two years. The focus was in identifying local experts interested in joining the WIDECAST network, and sharing WIDECAST's conservation model.

In 1991, Caribbean governments signed the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol of the Cartagena Convention (1983) of which Article 10 specifically declares that Parties "carry out recovery, management planning and other measures to effect the survival of [endangered or threatened] species" and regulate or prohibit activities having "adverse effects on such species and their habitats". In addition, this Protocol declares that "each Party shall ensure total protection and recovery to the species of fauna listed in Annex II," in which all six species of Caribbean-occurring sea turtles were included in 1991.

In 1992, WIDECAST members collaborated on habitat surveys and training workshops. Many previously undiscovered sea turtle areas were discovered this year, e.g. Manatee Bar Area in Belize, the south coast of Jamaica, and the Paria Peninsula in Venezuela.

By 1993, ten countries had completed their Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plans.

In 1994, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recognized WIDECAST as one of its most important programs.

By 1995, WIDECAST had Country Coordinators in 30 nations and its conservation efforts ranged from community-led co-management programs to legislation and federal action.

In 1996, Karen Eckert received a Pew Charitable Trust Fellowship to pay her salary as Executive Director as she further developed WIDECAST's infrastructure. Next step - build on this momentum and operationalize WIDECAST as an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization!

Marydele Donnelly commented on how useful the input and experience of WIDECAST network members has been in the establishment of the Indian Ocean network, of which some members are present at this Meeting. Their objective is to learn more about what is entailed in establishing and maintaining a multilateral sea turtle conservation network.

Coffee Break

Karen Eckert began the "Open Forum" session by reminding Meeting participants that this session provides an opportunity for network members to share their thoughts on how WIDECAST can move forward now that it will soon be formalized as an NGO, i.e. what have been our successes and failures.

Diego Amorocho, Country Coordinator in Colombia, addressed the Meeting and summarized the following activities undertaken by the WIDECAST network in Colombia during 1996:

Diego has a new position with Fundacion FES) and is currently not working with sea turtles, but hopes to involve several students in the study of sea turtles in the San Andreas Providence Islands, 14,000 km² of area in which loggerheads, hawksbill and green turtles nest. The network trained 90 marines who live in the San Andreas Islands to collect data on nesting sea turtles. 178 sea turtles were tagged and measured in the San Andreas Providence Islands. A short course on sea turtle biology and conservation was taught by Diego in the San Andreas Providence Islands. Approximately 2,000 WIDECAST sea turtle identification leaflets were distributed. The sea turtle network in Colombia raised \$6,000 for sea turtle research and conservation.

FES (Diego Amorocho) and WIDECAST (Karen Eckert) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in November 1996, establishing FES as the lead organization for Colombia. Karen would like to see more of these type of agreements and suggested that this MOU could be used as a model. In the past, agreements to work on WIDECAST matters had not been needed because WIDECAST representatives had already been working with sea turtles. Currently these agreements are helpful in reminding lead organizations of their role: to archive WIDECAST materials and provide institutional support (i.e., fax, phone, Xerox). The preference is to have only one lead organization and associated MOU in each country.

The focus for the Colombia network in 1997 will be to continue habitat surveys and to conduct research on the relationship between incubation temperature and hatchling sex because most sea turtle nests encountered in the Islands are relocated to a hatchery. Diego would like to see a consortium of NGOs for sea turtle conservation in the future.

Neca Marcovaldi (Brazil) addressed the Meeting and asked why WIDECAST has no representatives from Mexico. Karen Eckert responded that WIDECAST Country Coordinator Georgita Ruiz had

written various state-level plans (in lieu of a single national plan), but these had not been operationalized. The Mexican government is supportive of WIDECAS, but negotiations are needed to ensure that each coastal state has a WIDECAS lead organization.

Rhema Kerr (Jamaica) addressed the Meeting and asked if participants from the WIDECAS Annual Meeting can receive information from the Latin American Forum, which is simultaneously conducted. It was suggested that the Minutes from the two meetings be exchanged.

Anny Chaves (Costa Rica) addressed the Meeting and summarized activities having to do with sea turtle conservation in her country during 1996. There is currently no Country Coordinator, and Anny mentioned that this has been a hard year in Costa Rica. When the Costa Rican network was first established in 1984, it consisted of more than 20 organizations linked with WIDECAS. Anny feels most people are now working independently and no longer as a network. However, during a recent contract with Conservation International to study the status of the West Indian Manatee, Anny was able to renew many of her WIDECAS contacts again.

Anny is concerned about the annual sea turtle harvest, in which 30 fishermen receive seasonal permits to hunt sea turtles. She claims that the annual take of turtles is higher than the allotted 1,500 turtles and in 1996, the legal butcher house in Costa Rica was closed by the Ministry of Health due to its unsanitary conditions. Fishermen were still given permits to harvest sea turtles, however, and as a result sea turtles were harvested in large numbers on many beaches.

Sea turtle biology and conservation courses of Santa Rosa and Ostional are still occurring and a new course for sea turtle guides is currently being offered. A sea turtle tour guide is paid US\$ 4.00 to lead a tour of a maximum of ten people onto a sea turtle nesting beach.

Elizabeth Subin (Anguilla) addressed the Meeting and summarized activities undertaken by the WIDECAS network in Anguilla. She has recently joined Ed Carty as a co-Country Coordinator in Anguilla and brought the strength and capacity of the Anguilla National Trust (for which she serves as Executive Director) to the WIDECAS network.

There is mostly hawksbill nesting on Anguilla, but the population has exhibited a serious decline in recent decades. Juvenile greens are seen in nearshore waters. There are 33 beaches on the mainland of Anguilla, in addition to the beaches of its offshore keys to monitor for nesting, with approximately six volunteers walking the beaches for the entire nesting season of June to September. In 1996, the turtle program found it challenging to keep its volunteers throughout the entire season and also to have data sheets filled out accurately. A five-year Sea Turtle Moratorium was established to protect Anguilla's sea turtles four years ago; this is its last year. Residents now see more turtles in the water and think it's due to the moratorium. Liz feels it is more likely due to the U.S. Virgin Islands Moratorium which has been in place for twenty years.

The focus of the sea turtle project of Anguilla this year has been to establish a database on sea turtle nesting and mortality on the island and its offshore keys, to establish a public awareness program (radio programs, slide shows, T-shirt sales), and to work with the Fisheries Department to extend the moratorium.

Rhema Kerr (Jamaica, currently a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Georgia) addressed the Meeting and described the hawksbill project in Antigua. Rhema is currently doing her Master's degree work at the University of Georgia analyzing Jim Richardson's ten year hawksbill project in Antigua. Jim mentioned a situation similar to Anguilla in that they're seeing more young green turtles in Antigua's nearshore waters. Their place of origin is unknown. He added that his project has encountered much difficulty in reaching out to the upper class communities in Antigua to raise funds for sea turtle conservation on the island.

A discussion ensued regarding fund raising through WIDECAST (now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit) for the benefit of the main office, and also for Caribbean projects. Consensus is that it would be the responsibility of the local (recipient) organization to decide how funds are distributed and accounted for.

Denis Castro (Nicaragua) addressed the Meeting and summarized activities undertaken by the first year of the WIDECAST network in the Miskito Coast Area of Nicaragua. This is a large area with many keys inhabited by a diversity of marine life, especially the green turtle. Legally separate due to the regional autonomy of its inhabitants, the Miskito Indians, there are currently many problems with the government in this area. The U.S. AID and Caribbean Conservation Corporation invested many years and monies in establishing the Miskito Keys as a Protected Area, but recently stopped their work in the area and no longer support local environmental conservation. Denis suggests that a quota (*veda*) is seriously needed in this area to enforce the protection of sea turtles because there are currently no rules concerning turtle hunting.

Historically, the green turtle has been harvested for subsistence by many communities in this area. The focus of the sea turtle project which Denis leads is to reduce the take of green turtles by encouraging alternatives such as lobster fishing and establishing an environmental education program. In 1996, this project raised funds from T-shirt sales for an environmental education program and data collection. Turtle fishermen were encouraged to switch from turtle to lobster fishing and were taught to build lobster traps. The number of turtle fishing communities has decreased from five to two, and the number of dories which fish green turtles from 80 to 6. Most fishermen now fish for lobster, but this also is significantly impacting the environment; e.g., heavy traps are often dropped on coral reefs. The turtle project is trying to raise funds to continue its environmental education efforts in the Miskito Area. A \$400 proposal has been submitted to the Wildlife Conservation Society and Denis will submit a proposal to the Columbus Zoo/WIDECAST 'small grants fund', as well. Karen Eckert encouraged Denis to look to the WIDECAST network for any support he or his project needed.

Lunch 12:45 - 2:15 pm

Henk Reichart (Suriname) described the sea turtle situation in Suriname to be quite dismal since the military has come into power. There is tremendous egg poaching and several turtles killed annually. Many leatherbacks wash ashore dead, appearing to have drowned in gill nets. STINASU is increasingly uncooperative and no longer funding any turtle conservation efforts. A conservation foundation has been formed in Galibi in an effort to stop the egg and turtle poaching.

Neca Marcovaldi (Brazil) addressed the Meeting and described the activities undertaken by members of the WIDECAST network in Brazil from the Fundacao Pro-TAMAR. The project is currently focusing on the incidental catch of turtles by gill-nets in nearshore waters. Fishermen are being hired to bring the

incidentally caught turtles to TAMAR biologists for measurement and tagging. Neca asked for input in how to manage such a database and is interested in establishing an exchange program with an institution who has experience with such work. Karen Eckert suggested she speak with Ralf Boulon from the U.S. Virgin Islands, who has been conducting a capture-recapture tagging study for many years. Network members contributed that incidental catch is a major problem in other areas of the Caribbean also, such as Trinidad, Bonaire and Nicaragua.

Charles Tambiah (Sri Lanka) addressed the Meeting to describe the ongoing sea turtle conservation initiatives in the Indian Ocean. The strategy for conservation in the Indian Ocean region is to establish a regional network on which to build, and, inspired by WIDECAST, the first priority is to write national and regional sea turtle conservation strategies. The northern and southern Indian Ocean strategies are done, and the western Indian Ocean strategy shall be the next one to be written. Once the strategies are finished, a regional office will be established in either Sri Lanka or India and a regional coordinator appointed. A proposal was submitted to the Asian Development bank for establishing this office.

Charles described a recent initiative to create a global task force for community-based conservation in an effort to enhance conflict resolution within communities struggling with sea turtle conservation issues. Objectives of this task force are: (i) to create a directory of community projects throughout the world which can be made available to other community projects and (ii) to look at current conservation problems and solutions at the community level.

"Visualizing the Future"

The afternoon session entitled "Visualizing the Future" was devoted to two small discussion groups, one in English and one in Spanish, representing WIDECAST in Latin America and WIDECAST in the Eastern Caribbean islands. Objective of this discussion session was to determine what network members feel the central WIDECAST office's direction and focus should be for the next year. Karen Eckert encouraged participants to consider, based on their experiences, how the network should move forward and what they expect from the central office in the next year. She asked for specific feedback on changes in network structure, direction, etc.

Rhema Kerr (Jamaica) chaired the English speaking discussion group which had the following participants: Rebecca Bell (USA), Karen Eckert (USA), Kalli de Meyer (Bonaire), Hank Reichart (Suriname), Jim Richardson (USA), Elizabeth Subin (Anguilla) and Charles Tambiah (USA). Hedely Guada (Venezuela) chaired the Spanish discussion group which had the following participants: Diego Amorocho (Colombia), Denis Castro (Nicaragua), Anny Chaves (Costa Rica), Wilma Katz (USA - representing Guatemala), Neca Marcovaldi (Brazil), Alexis Suarez (USA), and Vicente Vera (Venezuela).

SUMMARY: Latin American Discussion Group

The Latin America discussion group began by acknowledging the dedication, capacity, and enthusiasm of its network members and noting that these are not areas of concern. The group would like to see the strengthening of fundraising, public awareness/education, and communication capacity within network members in Latin America in the coming years. Specific recommendations generated by the Latin America discussion group for the WIDECAST central office are as follows:

- (i) To provide a training workshop for Country Coordinators on how to fund-raise; e.g., write proposals and identify and contact (and communicate with) potential donors.
- (ii) To have paid Regional Coordinators and/or Program Officers to support the regional conservation efforts of Country Coordinators.
- (iii) To identify potential WIDECAST donors, both internationally and nationally.
- (iv) To establish in-country mechanisms to receive donations in Latin American countries, possibly as more formal agreements or MOUs with lead organizations.
- (v) To collaborate with a larger organization, such as Conservation International, in order to learn about fundraising and program development.
- (vi) To increase networking capacity of WIDECAST in Latin America; e.g., to encourage all network members to get on email and to have a regional meeting in Latin America.
- (vii) To have more environmental education and technical materials available in Spanish.
- (viii) To establish collaborative efforts between projects; e.g., Country Coordinator exchanges between programs to learn about running a WIDECAST office, research methods, etc.
- (ix) To generate income for the WIDECAST Latin America program by selling a product which would also educate people

After generating the list of recommendations for the central office, discussion ensued regarding the specific in-country needs and experiences of each Country Coordinator.

Neca Marcovaldi, Country Coordinator in Brazil, began the discussion by sharing her experience as President of Fundacao Pró-TAMAR for ten years. She believes there are two integral requirements for a successful conservation program: (1) that its infrastructure does not depend on us personally and (2) that it is sustainably funded. The infrastructure of a program, Neca stated, should include paid positions of Executive Director or President and Regional Coordinators or Program Officers. To create sustainable funding for a program, Neca believes a program must find its own means of bringing in monies; e.g., by selling a product, having a paid development person on staff; and having mechanisms such as agreements with local organizations to receive funds nationally.

Hedelvy Guada (Venezuela) discussed her experience with the limitation of lack of funds as she struggles to find the time to complete the Venezuelan Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan (STRAP). Her plan in Venezuela is to finish the STRAP and then seek funds nationally for the implementation of a science-based sea turtle conservation program.

Anny Chaves (Costa Rica) stated how effective the WIDECAST educational materials have been in both developing WIDECAST's role in Costa Rica and in educating people about sea turtles on both the Caribbean and Pacific coasts. She believes that finishing the STRAP is the first and most crucial step in

establishing the WIDECAST network in a country. She expressed concern that there is a limitation for plans written in Spanish because they have been unable to be translated.

Wilma Katz discussed the needs for the development of a sea turtle program in Guatemala. She has been assisting Guatemala's Country Coordinator, Maria Mercedes Lopez, to establish priorities, network contacts and seek funding to establish such a program. Maria is currently working in the Petén Region and is in Guatemala City one week per month. In order to establish a sea turtle program in Guatemala, funding must be sought to conduct nesting beach surveys and local interviews, compile data from such surveys, and then write the STRAP.

Diego Amorocho (Colombia) described the following needs of the Colombia network based on his experience during his first year as Country Coordinator: To learn research techniques from network colleagues; To have more regional public awareness and educational materials in Spanish; To have computer equipment donated, such as old computers that may possibly be getting thrown away; To have increased network communications and exchange of information, i.e. regarding research, donors and publications; To have greater access to publications and translations of written materials relevant to the WIDECAST network in Colombia; To secure funding for the Country Coordinator so he can devote more time to WIDECAST in Colombia; To learn how to fundraise; and To generate income to for the WIDECAST network by selling a product.

5:00 pm Adjourn

ON 4 MARCH, breakfast was catered to the Wood Stork Room at 8:00 a.m. The Meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Karen Eckert, Executive Director. Karen welcomed new Meeting Participants, each of whom was introduced in turn.

The Executive Director began the Meeting by presenting recommendations made to the WIDECAST central office by yesterday's small discussion groups. In general, network members stressed the following needs:

- (i) Strengthening network communications.
- (ii) Enhancing WIDECAST's fundraising capacity (i.e., nonprofit status, MOUs, fundraising workshop).
- (iii) Tangible educational materials such as a slide show, conservation brochures, and newsletter
- (iv) Travel exchanges between programs to learn how to establish a conservation office, prioritize research techniques, etc.
- (v) Establishment of a WIDECAST Web Page to enhance public awareness and funding potential (with perhaps a wish list from WIDECAST network members).

Invited Presentations

Marydele Donnelly (Program Officer, IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group) presented an overview of the "Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles" which

is the world's first sea turtle treaty and has important implications for sea turtle conservation in the region. Treaty negotiations, in which over 25 countries participated, began in 1994 and were completed in September of 1996. The treaty will be opened for signature until December of 1998. The U.S., Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico and Costa Rica have signed the treaty. Once eight countries ratify it, it will go into effect 90 days later.

This treaty emerged from a 1989 U.S. law dictating 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 shrimp trawlers operate in waters where sea turtles occur, but soon found that the issues are broader than simply using TEDs – so the new treaty addresses a number of issues and has evolved into an effective instrument for sea turtle conservation.

The heart of this treaty is Article IV "Measures," which describes the measures a country should take to protect sea turtles in their area, such as the prohibition of intentional capture or killing of turtles, compliance with CITES obligations, promotion of research, environmental education and the reduction to the greatest extent possible of incidental capture. This section also includes potential exceptions to the Treaty in IV 2(a), 'The intentional killing of turtles for subsistence purposes,' voted into the Treaty by Honduras, Suriname, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The ability for countries to make an exception to this article gives these countries some independence, and it is more important to potentially include these nations in the Treaty through such an exception than to exclude them from the Treaty altogether.

As with all treaties, the Inter-American Convention does not have an enforcement agency. There is one enforcement mechanism, the U.S. Pelly Amendment to the Fishermen's Protection Act which allows the U.S. to embargo a nation which does not support or comply with an international treaty to which it has signed.

Jim Richardson from the University of Georgia and long-time WIDECAST Team Member presented an overview of his ten year study of hawksbill ecology in Pasture Bay, Jumby Island, Antigua. Nesting beaches are monitored nightly during the nesting season, June 15 - November 15. Nesting females are tagged whenever encountered and nests are counted. This long-term saturation tagging program aims to answer the following questions regarding hawksbill fecundity and survivorship:

- (i) How long is an animal in the reproductive population?
- (ii) How many eggs can a turtle lay over a long time period?
- (iii) How many years to reach sexual maturity? This is perhaps the most important thing to estimate.
- (iv) What is the survivorship of nesting females?

This study has learned that each individual turtle has her own nesting schedule, and nesting is distributed throughout the entire year. Tagging data shows that hawksbills in Antigua only use the windward beach. There is some evidence to support that hawksbills probably used to have huge nesting pulses or surges; perhaps hawksbills used to nest *en masse*, in *arribadas*. Tag returns from juveniles are reported from Grenada to the Dominican Republic.

Both Jim and Hank Reichart raised the concern that due to the long life of a turtle, it may take 40 to 50 years before the impacts of harvesting are exhibited in a population.

Wilma Katz (Manasota Key Sea Turtle Patrol, Florida) spoke on the issue of beach front lighting. She mentioned that not only do lights need to be considered, but also the reflection they emit onto the beach. She described low-tech methods to shield lights near nesting beaches and drew attention to the fact that the height of lights affects the distance of impact on a beach.

Lunch 12:45 - 2:15 pm

Karen Eckert opened the afternoon session by welcoming new Meeting participants and describing the upcoming talks. Neca Marcovaldi, the new Chairperson for the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG), opened the afternoon session by describing the various projects of the Specialist Group: the writing of the Indian Ocean Marine Turtle Strategies and the Sea Turtle Technique Manual (which Karen Eckert is preparing). The MTSG will also be reviewing CITES questionnaires regarding the Cuban proposal to CITES.

Marydele Donnelly (Program Officer, MTSG) gave an overview of the Cuban proposal to downlist the Cuban hawksbill population from CITES Appendix I to Appendix II. She describes the proposal to be very detailed, with 37 pages of text and 85 pages of Annexes. Cuba has proposed to downlist the hawksbill turtle so that it can open a shell trade with Japan and experimentally ranch the species. This will allow Cuba to sell its 6 tons of stockpiled shell to Japan, which will generate approximately \$2.4 million for the country. They propose to collect eggs or young from wild and ranch with 50 animals in the first year, 100 animals the second year, and 300 animals in the third year. Under the Comp 315 CITES Ranching Rule, a country has to benefit the conservation of hawksbill locally. Cuba declares to have reduced their hawksbill take by 90% and promises to protect hawksbill habitat.

Marydele explained that there are four important points to consider about this proposal:

- (i) Hawksbill biology: the proposal has not dealt well with the biology of the species. First in stating that the Cuban hawksbill population is a closed population, despite research in several other countries showing that hawksbills migrate between nesting and foraging grounds. Secondly, there is inconsistency of biological data in the document.
- (ii) Trade with Japan: Several questions regarding this issue persist, such as is it Cuba or Japan who will benefit from this trade; and how will this trade impact the black market shell trade and the many stockpiles of shell found throughout the world? In 1994, the CITES criteria were made more explicit and now one must show that any proposed trade will not be detrimental to the species.
- (iii) Local communities: It is unclear how this proposal will benefit Cuba's local communities, or how many members of these communities will benefit. This question was asked of the Cuban representatives at the Latin American Forum, but no response was given.

This proposal will need 80 votes to be approved. Countries have an opportunity to comment on the proposal until March 31, 1997. IUCN has a questionnaire for comments of the proposal. CITES has

asked the MTSG to review these evaluations. The CITES meeting (COP10) will be this June in Zimbabwe. Four countries have so far commented that having experimental ranching in this proposal is inappropriate, especially since Cuba missed this year's ranching proposal deadline.

Anna Bass (BEECS Genetic Analysis Core, University of Florida) spoke on the "Genetic Population Structure of the Caribbean Hawksbill." 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 where they nest. Genetic analysis using molecular markers provides information on the migratory behavior of nesting hawksbill turtles, and the contributions of nesting colonies to regional foraging grounds. This allows us to positively link foraging and nesting aggregations with one another.

Analysis of foraging aggregates indicates that these cohorts are composed of individuals from nesting beaches throughout the region and are not composed solely of females or offspring from adjacent nesting beaches. For example, 25% of hawksbills foraging in Puerto Rico come from Cuba nesting beaches and 41% of hawksbills feeding in Puerto Rico come from the U.S. Virgin Islands. Such information is crucial to the conservation of hawksbills throughout the region, especially in light of the recently submitted proposal to downlist the Cuban hawksbill population from CITES Appendix I to II in order to establish trade with Japan and experimentally ranch the species. One implication of these findings is that harvesting individuals on foraging grounds can directly impact nesting sites hundreds of kilometers away. Anna cautions that these results are based on a small sample size of 147 animals, and she requested the continuing support of the network in this important research.

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