



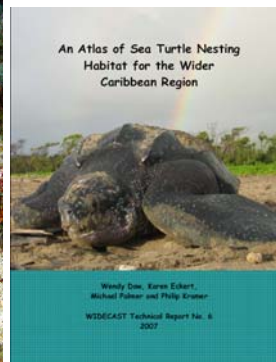
WIDECAST

Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network



WIDECAST

*Réseau de Conservation des Tortues
marines dans la Région de la Grande Caraïbe*



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: 2009

KAREN L. ECKERT, Ph.D.

2010 Annual Meeting

Karibea Resort Sainte-Luce

Martinique, French West Indies

2-4 March 2010



INTRODUCTION

The Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) – an international coalition of experts including Country Coordinators in more than 40 Caribbean nations and territories – works from the premise that conservation must be nurtured from within, that it cannot be commanded from outside. *SLIDE ADVANCE → [*]*

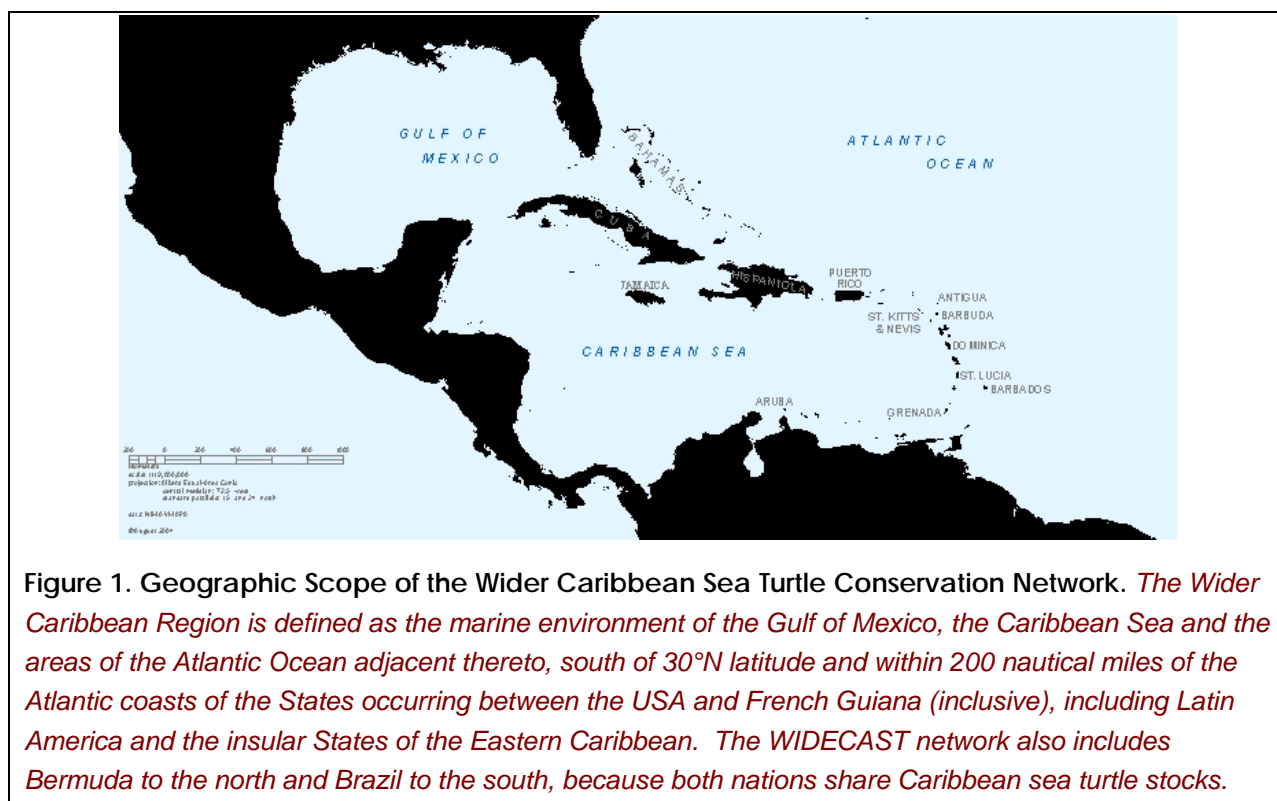
By working together to bring the best available science to bear on decision-making (at all levels), emphasizing information exchange and training, and encouraging unified practices, we create strong linkages between science, policy, and public participation in the design and implementation of sea turtle management programs. And in so doing, we increase the effectiveness of protection and sustainable use initiatives and we help to ensure a future where sea turtles can meaningfully fulfill their ecological, spiritual/cultural, and economic roles. *[*]*

WIDECAST is all about solutions. It's about building alliances and creating choices. It's about developing and promoting best practices, designing conservation models, strengthening institutions and building capacity at national and multinational levels, unifying the regulatory framework (so that, for example, turtles are not protected in one country only to be killed when they swim into the waters of a neighbouring country), encouraging and facilitating grassroots involvement, cultivating mentors, and raising public awareness. *[*]*

*In joining together to protect future options with regard to the use of sea turtles, participants in the network recognize **essential linkages between a healthy Caribbean ecosystem and economic prosperity for Caribbean people**. A thriving biodiversity base brings economic choices, economic diversity, and economic wealth over the long term, whereas a depleted resource base is far more likely to invite economic dependence, restricted choices, and poverty.*

Some of the largest sea turtle populations the world has even known were in the Caribbean Sea ... most of these have all but disappeared. [*] But present commitments are transforming a future that looked bleak only a few years ago. Thanks to the efforts of the WIDECast network – each of you! – many of our remnant populations are showing upward trends, trends we hope will only strengthen with time. [*]

The success we've seen is a reflection of the way in which we've always approached the conservation challenge. We embrace every Wider Caribbean range State, and including Bermuda to the north and Brazil to the south (Fig.1), thereby ensuring the benefits of many ideas and points of view, and over large geographic scales, rather than the more traditional focus on our own nation, or our own project, or our "own" population of sea turtles, ... as if there were such a thing. [*]



RELATIONSHIP TO UNEP-CEP

WIDECast was founded in the Dominican Republic in 1981 "[to prepare a] Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan ... consistent with the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme" (CEP). [*] We have always served the inter-

national community as a volunteer network of experts (a “Regional Activity Network” in the parlance of UNEP) to the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP), with specific emphasis on the objectives of the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA). We will hear more about the SPA Protocol tomorrow afternoon. [*]

The geographic scope of WIDECAS is coincident with that of the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, with the exception that we also embrace Bermuda and Brazil. In all, 43 States and territories actively participate in WIDECAS – and together contribute substantively to implementation of the SPA Protocol at local, national and regional levels. [*]

As every constituent nation and territory is host to at least four species of sea turtle, and all struggle with similar socio-political issues, all benefit equally from the capacity engendered by working together to promote sustainable conservation policies.

In addition to Country Coordinators resident in each participating country, WIDECAS [*] also has an executive office, a Latin American office, and an international Board of Directors. [*] Our collective role is to reverse the declining trend in Caribbean sea turtle populations by promoting a region-wide capability to design and implement scientifically sound conservation measures, and by assisting Governments in the discharge of their obligations under relevant international treaties. [*]



RATIONALE

We know that migratory turtles will not survive without this kind of regional cooperation. Once abundant in the Caribbean Sea and serving as keystone species in tropical marine ecosystems, sea turtles are now severely reduced from historical levels, both in population size and range. According to the IUCN *Red List of Threatened Species*, persistent over-exploitation, especially of gravid females, and widespread collection of eggs are primarily responsible for observed declines at regional and global scales. [*]

In addition to a largely unmanaged harvest and trade that has spanned centuries, sea turtles are accidentally captured in active or abandoned fishing gear, resulting in death to tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of turtles annually. Moreover, coral reef and sea grass degradation, oil spills, chemical waste, persistent plastic and other marine debris, high density coastal development, and an increase in ocean-based tourism have damaged or eliminated nesting beaches and feeding areas. [*]

Reversing population declines is complicated. Threats to sea turtle populations can accumulate over long periods of time, and can occur anywhere in the population's range. Because sea turtles are highly migratory by habit, what appears as a decline in a local population may be a direct consequence of the activities of peoples many hundreds or thousands of kilometers away. [*]

Thus while local conservation is crucial, cooperative action is also called for at international levels. WIDECAST is uniquely structured to define and address both national and international conservation priorities -- for sea turtles, their habitats, and for human communities that depend on healthy coastlines. [*]

"We see WIDECAST as a model initiative. By defining conservation priorities based on sound science, promoting consensus and emphasizing public awareness, the network has successfully integrated once isolated efforts into a collaborative regional response to the shared challenge of depleted sea turtle populations in our region."

~ Alessandra Vanzella-Khouri, UN Environment Programme, Kingston, Jamaica



VISION

The collective vision of the network is to realize a future where all inhabitants of the Wider Caribbean Region, human and sea turtle alike, can live together in balance; where healthy populations of sea turtles fulfill their ecological roles and economic potential; and critical natural habitats are sustainably managed. [*]

GOALS

Through research and conservation, outreach and education, and our shared commitment, WIDECAST seeks to: [*]

- Bring the best available science to bear on sea turtle management, conservation, and governance;
- Empower stakeholders to make effective use of science in the policy process;
- Train Caribbean scientists, managers and policy-makers in the science of sea turtle management through academic and field courses, thematic workshops, mentoring and exchange programs, and technical seminars;
- Provide an ongoing mechanism for collaboration at all levels, both within and among the nations of the Wider Caribbean Region; [*]
- Improve the long-term financial, institutional, social, and environmental sustainability of biodiversity protection in the Region;
- Demonstrate and replicate the best models for successful community-based sea turtle management, particularly in marginalized rural areas; and
- Secure funding to develop integrated natural resource management models, support multi-stakeholder participatory planning, develop core management capacities, and develop policy and institutional mechanisms to ensure "mainstreaming" of environmental concerns into other sectors. [*]



FINANCIAL STATUS

WIDECAST has a diverse funding base, including Government agencies (USA and others, as well as intergovernmental bodies such as UNEP, UNDP, and the European Union), private foundations (mostly in the USA), other nonprofit organizations (e.g. The

Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund), Corporations (e.g. Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, BHP Petroleum). We also receive mostly smaller contributions from zoos and aquaria, and from individuals. [*] While grants have risen over the years (Fig. 2), the global economic downturn is reflected in our lower fundraising success in 2008 - 09. [*]

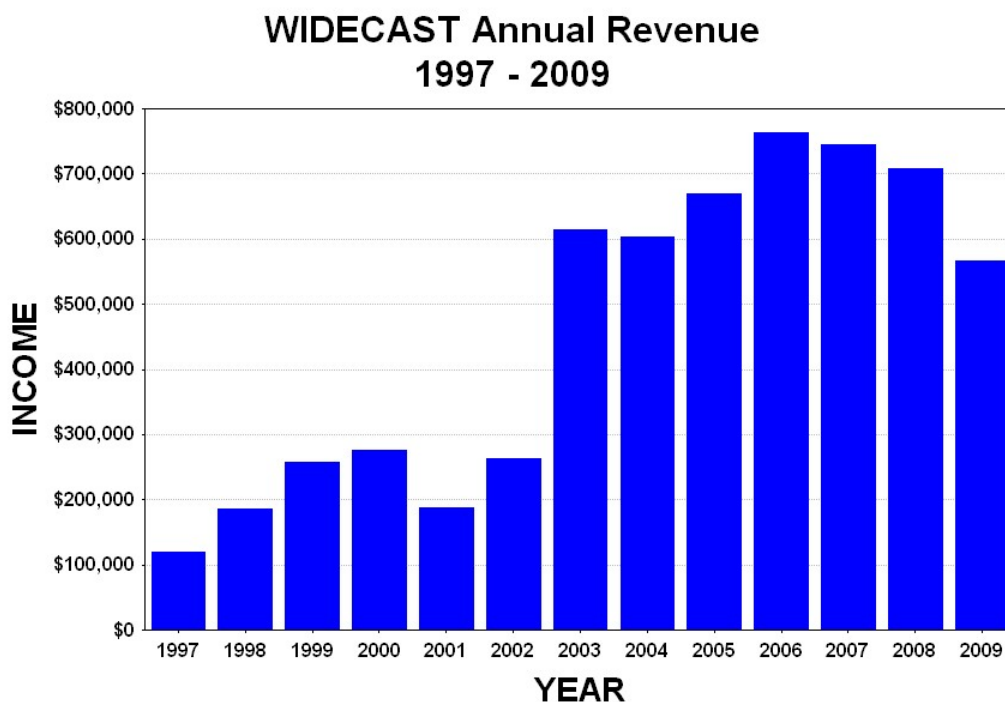


Figure 2. WIDECAST fund-raising during the 13 years from 1997
[our incorporation as a nonprofit organization] to 2009.

The WIDECAST bank account is open to receive grants from any WIDECAST partner, including all WIDECAST Country Coordinators. Most of the funds raised through WIDECAST and deposited in the US account in 2009 were earmarked for research in Antigua, Costa Rica, Dominica, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, and Venezuela.

Additional funds, typically more thematic in nature, were raised directly by WIDECAST staff – Scott and me, and by Didiher Chacón and his team in Costa Rica. These projects typically include bycatch and beachfront lighting mitigation, the development of ‘best practices’ for eco-tourism and nesting beach management, curriculum development, peer-training and apprenticeships, sea turtle injury response protocols and the training of Caribbean veterinarians, community-based sustainable livelihood programs, the website (www.widecast.org), our Annual Meeting, etc. [*]

MAJOR PROJECT SUMMARY: 2009

As in years past, my major focus in 2009 was to respond to your requests for help in strengthening your local programming. Training and capacity building comes in many forms, but peer-training – learning from each other – is one of our specialties. [*]

[Each project has its own slide] –

Dear Translators, I go off script now and will speak directly from the slides. I have attached these slides:

**** Note to the Translators:**

I go off script now, and I will
speak from the slides -->



"INVEST IN PEOPLE" (Leadership Training and Capacity Building)



WIDECAST partners teach annual **field courses** in Trinidad, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Bermuda

.... and host a variety of **workshops**, upon request, throughout the region every year.

Often these are **sector-specific** and focus on fishers, divers, data managers, hoteliers, or community-based tour guides.



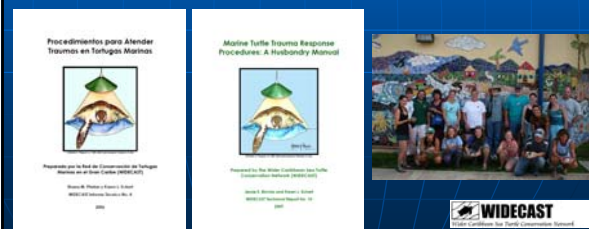
Our newest target audience is the region's **veterinarians, aquarists and rehabilitation professionals**, as well as wildlife officers and laymen on the front lines of animal rescue.

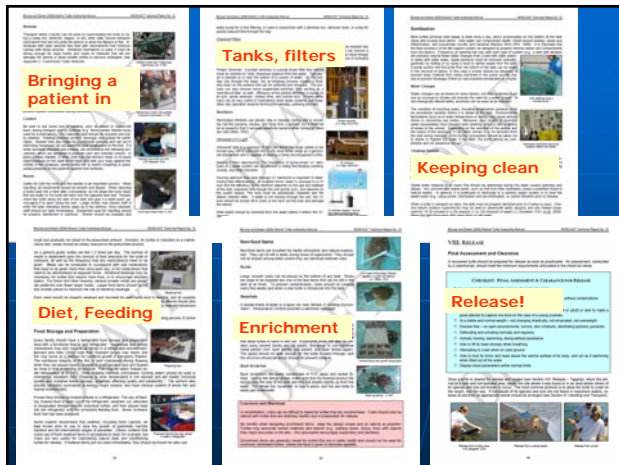


"Training for Life: WIDECAST's Sea Turtle Trauma Response Corps (STTRC)"

Project Period: ongoing

Project Objectives: To (i) translate into Spanish our **'first response' manual** into Spanish; (ii) develop, peer-review a **husbandry manual** to guide caregivers during rehabilitation; (iii) sponsor Caribbean vets to attend the annual **Florida Sea Turtle Workshop**, exposing them to current medical/ rehabilitation techniques; (iv) utilize the WIDECAST network to **build the STTRC**, sponsor 'hotlines' in each country, organize data collection/archive guidelines at national levels, etc.; and (vii) **create a website** for outputs and networking.





"Conservation Leadership Training"

Grant Period: January - December 2009

Project Objectives: In **Bermuda**, an international short course in sea turtle biology and at-sea population monitoring. In **Dominica**, a "train the trainers" field course so that trainees could prepare nesting beach patrol teams within their communities. In **Venezuela**, a workshop to train field assistants in leadership and teamwork skills, communication techniques, conflict resolution, and negotiation skills; also the II International Course in Sea Turtles and Ecotourism convened in Paria. At **Duke University**, to teach "*Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles*", including a 7-day field trip to Trinidad, giving students an opportunity to conduct field work at Matura Beach, **Trinidad**, as well as interact with local resource managers.



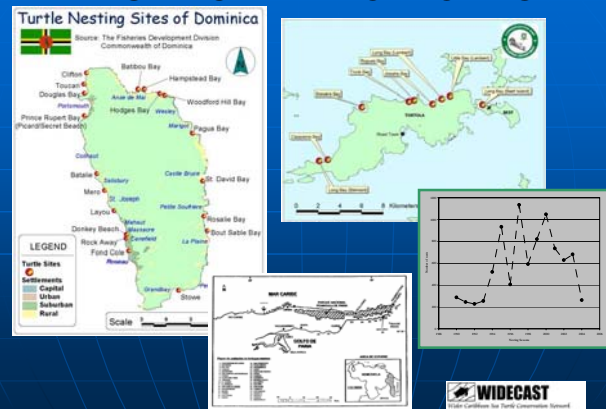
"2009 Annual Meeting"

Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine
St. Kitts, Eastern Caribbean / 18-20 December 2008

Project Objectives: (i) **Convene the Annual Meeting** of the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network, featuring national reports, invited technical presentations, and Working Group session; (ii) provide travel support for national representatives; and (iii) provide an **interactive venue for experts**, as well as those new to the conservation and management of Caribbean sea turtles, to **network and exchange ideas**, update themselves on issues of regional concern, discuss best practices, identify gaps in research and management information, and make **recommendations** on future programming.



"RESEARCH AND MONITORING"



"Community-based Conservation of the Sea Turtles in Caribbean Costa Rica: Cahuita and the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge"

Project Period: ongoing

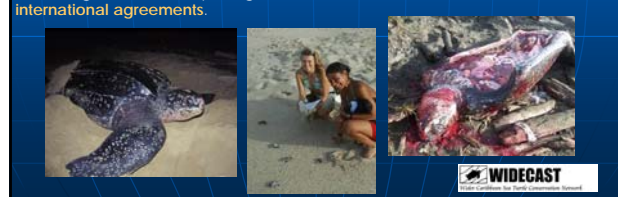
Project Objectives: To (i) develop conservation and investigative methods that **enhance sea turtle survival**; (ii) facilitate information exchange and **coordination among community and conservation groups**; (iii) attract volunteers and sustainable **financial and institutional support**, including formulating an international volunteer recruitment and registration program; (iv) implement **environmental education in the community**, and sponsor annual training in sustainable use (including eco-tourism options); (v) design appropriate linkages and **strategic relationships with policy organizations**; and (vi) work with WIDECAST experts to develop a "Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan for Costa Rica".



"Bi-National Conservation of Leatherback Sea Turtles in Costa Rica and Panama"

Project Period: ongoing

Project Objective(s): To (i) **identify threats**, and improve the conservation status of sea turtles in the proposed area; (ii) promote the recovery of **critical habitat** through corrective actions; (iii) induce within governmental bodies in each country the **application of policies and regulations** that have a positive conservation impact; (iv) **inspire a change in the conscience** level of the communities around key nesting areas; (v) facilitate the conservation of sea turtles through the **generation of socio-economic alternatives** for the improvement of the level and quality of life of the communities; (vi) increase the **technical skills** of Panamanian partners for sea turtle conservation and monitoring; and (vii) support national governments in putting into force recommendations of relevant **international agreements**.



"Jumby Bay Hawksbills: Long Term Ecological Research in the Caribbean" Project Period: Ongoing

Project Objective(s): *Inter alia*, to (i) **gather comprehensive long-term data** on population parameters and general biology relating to reproduction, survivorship, genetic origin, and post-reproductive movements of hawksbill sea turtles nesting at Jumby Bay, Long Island, Antigua; (ii) provide quantitative information on population behavior suitable for construction and/ or **evaluation of population models**, conservation initiatives and fisheries management plans for hawksbills, with special focus on Eastern Caribbean populations; (iii) measure and **evaluate conflicts and possible resolutions surrounding luxury home** development on the nesting beach; and (iv) use the Jumby Bay project as a keystone project to **stimulate implementation of the UNEP/WIDECAST "Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan for Antigua & Barbuda"**.



"Monitoring Large Sea Turtle Colonies: The Role of Rural Communities in Research, Management and Livelihood Development" Project Period: ongoing

Project Objectives: To (i) involve **local communities in a nation-wide leatherback nesting index/ census**, including providing training and program evaluation; (ii) host **Earthwatch volunteers** participating in the Index Beach monitoring and conservation at Matura Beach, the world's second largest *Dermochelys* nesting colony; and (iii) provide a **model for non-consumptive use** through the development of community-based eco-tourism.



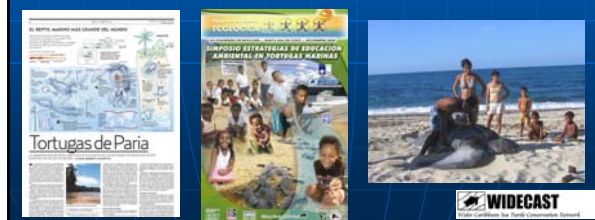
"Sea Turtle Population Monitoring and Community Eco-Tourism in Dominica" Project Period: Ongoing

Project Objective(s): To (i) design **science-based sea turtle monitoring program** for Dominica; (ii) provide **training** in database management; (iii) identify and nurture the **optimal community structure** needed to implement the program; and (iv) provide formal training in professional, **community based eco-tourism** (trainers: Nature Seekers, Trinidad).



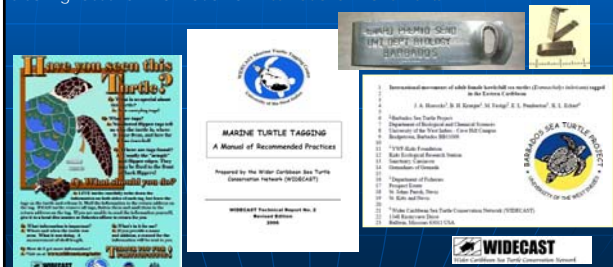
"Protecting Venezuela's Largest Continental Nesting Colonies" Project Period: Ongoing

Project Objectives: To (i) **estimate population sizes and trends**, and promote population recovery in five species of endangered sea turtles nesting and foraging at Peninsula de Paria through ecological field studies, **assessment of survival threats**, and capacity-building for local stakeholders (e.g. education, outreach, involvement in research and conservation actions); (ii) provide training and organization for the **sale of artisanal work**, based on sea turtles, to generate income at the grassroots level; (iii) maintain the nation's first permanent **sea turtle research station** at Cipara, Peninsula de Paria.



"Marine Turtle Tagging Centre (MTC): UWI-Cave Hill, Barbados" Project Period: ongoing

Project Objectives: To (i) **strengthen and coordinate small-scale tagging projects** in the Wider Caribbean Region, (ii) encourage and **facilitate collaboration** among range States with regard to sea turtle tagging and the documentation of inter-national movements, (iii) **provide training and equipment** to field projects; (iv) **archive tag fate data** for all participating projects; and (v) provide a central clearinghouse for information on **international movements**.



"EMPHASISE SUSTAINABILITY"

..... in fisheries



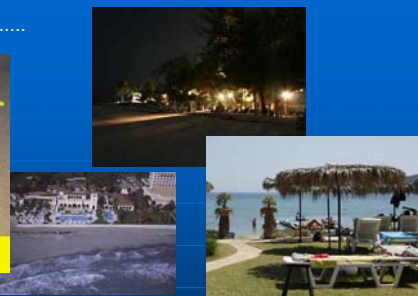
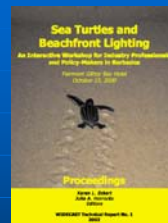
As of 1 January 2010, **TEDs were made mandatory in French Guiana!** As a Department of France, French Guiana is the first EU entity to enact a TED requirement for its shrimp trawl fleet, and the first EU entity to seek U.S. shrimp export authorization through a TED requirement in their fishery.

"Experiment to Evaluate the Target Catch and Bycatch Reduction Effectiveness of Surface and Mid-Water Drift Gillnets in Trinidad" Project Period: ongoing

Project Objectives: To (i) **introduce and test new methods** (low profile nets, trolling) to **reduce leatherback entanglements with minimal loss of revenue to fishers**; (ii) compare the catch rates of target species of finfish for each net type; (iii) compare the catch rates of bycatch species of finfish for each net type; (iv) compare the catch rates of sea turtles for each net type; (v) introduce bycatch reduction methods (reduced profile nets & troll fishing) to fishers in SE Trinidad; (vi) Improve trolling fish catch rates through artificial bait change appropriate to Trinidad fisheries; and (vii) Reduce leatherback bycatch in the bottom set gillnet fishery using narrow profile nets.



..... in tourism

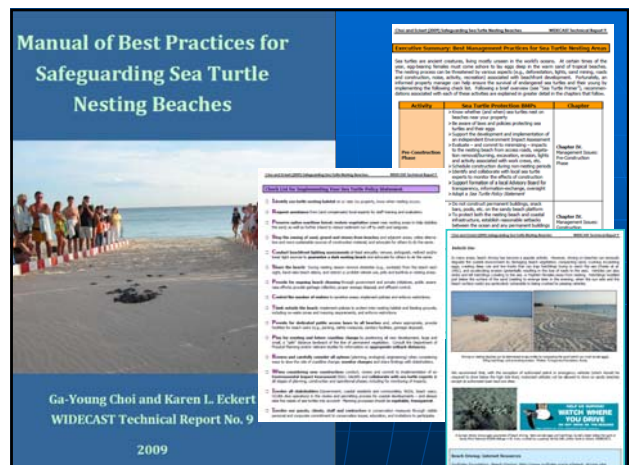
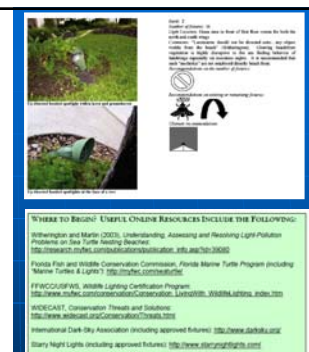
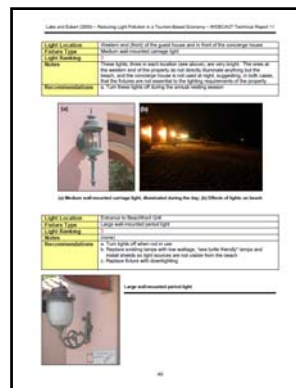
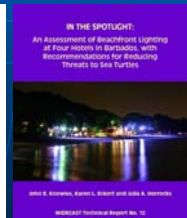
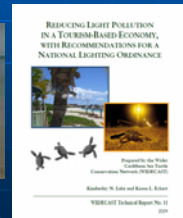


Hoteliers participating in a beachfront lighting workshop sponsored by **WIDECAST & the Tourism Development Corporation in Barbados** in 2000 unanimously recommended that **"Beachfront hotels in sea turtle nesting areas should have a Sea Turtle Policy Statement supported by Environmental Management Systems."**



"Taking Back the Night: Managing Coastal Light Pollution" [Barbados, Anguilla] Project Period: March 2006 – September 2009

Project Objectives: To (i) in partnership with local management staff, conduct **lighting assessments of hotels on sea turtle nesting beaches** in Barbados and Anguilla; (ii) in Barbados, assess progress since 2000 hotelier workshop; (iii) **establish a baseline** for future evaluations; (iv) **explore incentives** for hoteliers to select 'turtle friendly'; (v) **provide a model** for other nations, facing similar coastal management issues, to follow in their efforts to initiate a national dialogue with the tourism industry on this important topic; and (vi) **publish and distribute** results.



... in livelihoods ... "Crafts for Conservation" [Central America] Grant Period: Ongoing

Project Objectives: To (i) support sustainable livelihoods in coastal communities through **eco-crafting**; (ii) create a **model program**, including materials acquisition and evaluation, for other countries to follow; (iii) facilitate peer-training/exchange to share knowledge; and (iv) create **international markets**.



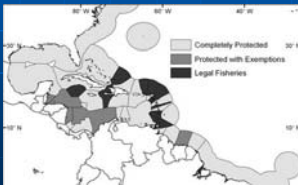
"Crafts for Conservation" [Eastern Caribbean Islands] Grant Period: Ongoing

Project Objectives: To (i) support sustainable livelihoods in coastal communities through **eco-crafting**; (ii) create a **model program**, including materials acquisition and evaluation, for other countries to follow; (iii) facilitate peer-training/exchange to share knowledge; and (iv) create **international markets**.



... in legislation ...

"Hi Karen, Some good news – our cabinet has amended the marine turtle fishery legislation include a **MAXIMUM size limit**, has **extended the closed season** to include April and November, and has **banned the use of set-nets**. Thank you for your help with this over the years! See you next week, Janice"



Wednesday, 30 January 2008

Cuba has banned the harvesting of all marine turtle species and products from its beaches and seas for an indefinite period, according to a Ministry of Fisheries Ministerial Resolution.



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"PUBLIC AWARENESS"

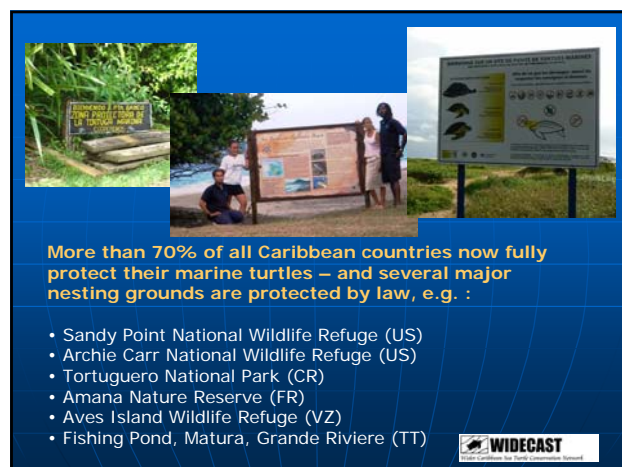


... through signage ...



... through poetry and art ...







- For all six Caribbean-occurring sea turtle species, there are examples of rising populations
- Caribbean youth and volunteers have matured into graduate students, project directors, educators, and policy-makers
- Livelihoods have diversified from resource extraction based economies to embrace research, ecotourism, fair trade agriculture, eco-crafting, and small business



"It takes a village to raise a child"
***It takes a network
to raise a sea turtle***



*Congratulations for work well done,
and for much success yet to come!*