

# A Decade of Conservation and Challenges

SAINT LUCIA

Marine Turtles

Marie-Louise Felix

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2019 WIDECAST Annual Meeting

- *Caretta caretta*, Loggerhead Sea Turtle
- *Chelonia mydas*, Green Sea Turtle
- *Dermochelys coriacea*, Leatherback Sea Turtle
- *Eretmochelys imbricata*, Hawksbill Sea Turtle
- *Lepidochelys kempii*, Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle
- *Lepidochelys olivacea*, Olive Ridley Sea Turtle

# **Turtles Reported to be present in Saint Lucia**

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# Historically

Sea Turtles were exploited for their meat and eggs.

A turtle fishery existed in Saint Lucia until a moratorium on their capture was implemented in March of 1996.

The moratorium was based on global and local concerns for declining trends in both turtle nesting and commercial catches over preceding decades.



- Destruction or Modification of Habitat
- Disease or Predation
- Over-utilisation / consumption
- Inadequate Regulatory Mechanisms
- Other Natural or Man-made Factors

# Threats to Sea Turtles 1980s-1990s.

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Prior to the moratorium,

Laws prohibited

- disturbance, collection, sale or consumption of turtle eggs;
- disturbance or killing of nesting females;
- setting of turtle nets within 100 m of the shoreline;
- capture of turtles below species-specific size limits and during a close season which existed from March 1st through to September 30th each year.

# **Fisheries Regulations in Place Prior to 1996**

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- Manage and Protect Habitat
- Provide for enforcement of guidelines
- Develop educational materials
- Prevent or mitigate degradation of nesting beaches
- Halt sand mining
- Manage Lights at nesting sites
- Beach stabilisation structures
- Prevent or mitigate damage to marine ecosystems



## **Sea turtle Recovery and Action Plan D'Auvergne & Eckert 1993**

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- Manage and protect all life stages from egg, juveniles, immature and adult turtles
- Augment existing law enforcement efforts
- Investigate alternative livelihoods for turtle fishermen
- Determine incidental catch and promote the use of TEDs
- Supplement reduced populations using management techniques

## **Action Plan cont'd**

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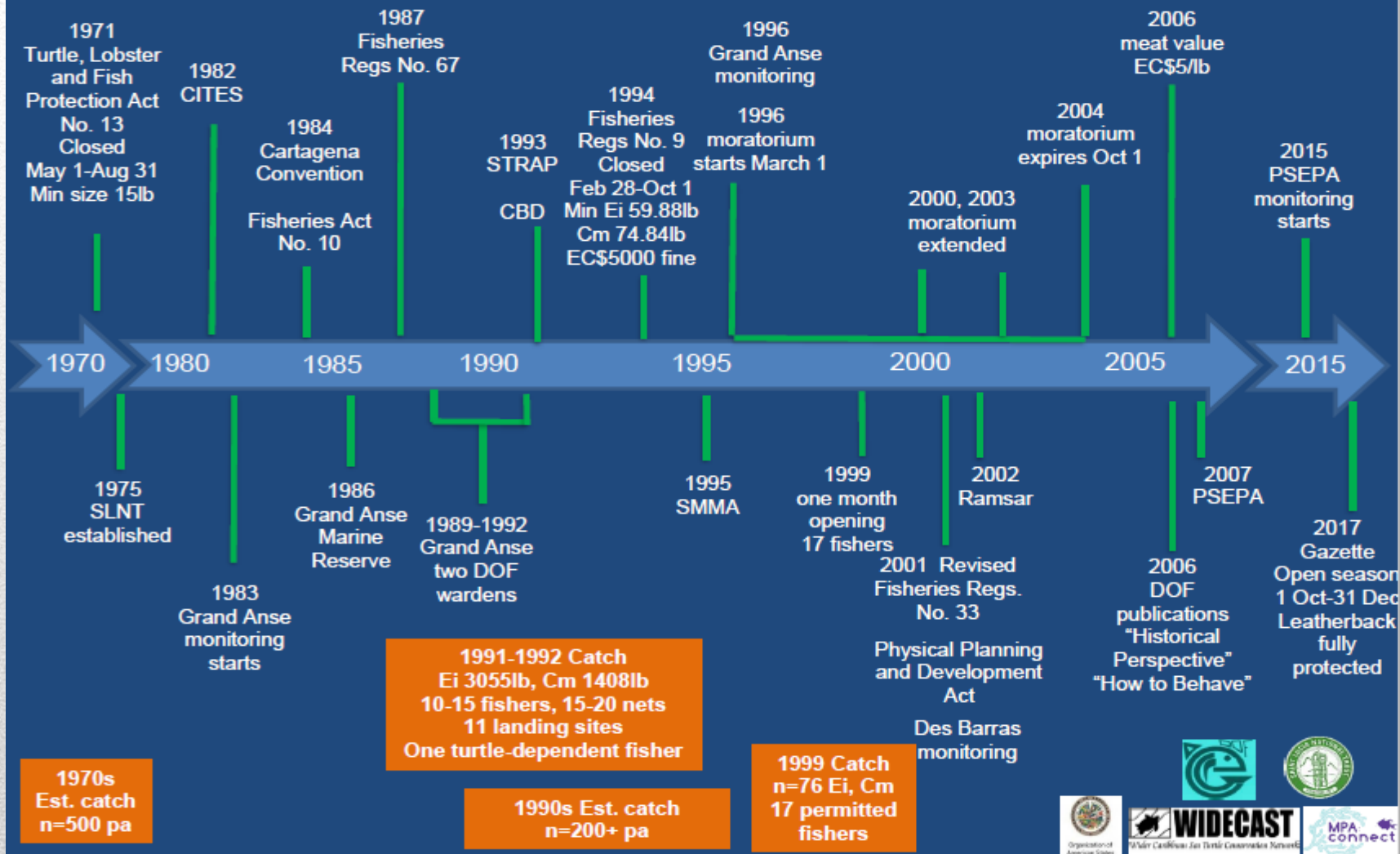
- Dept. of Fisheries
- Saint Lucia Naturalists Society
- Saint Lucia National Trust

# Organizations

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# Saint Lucia Sea Turtle Management Timeline



# Moratorium in place

- Poaching of turtles
- Poaching of eggs
- Beach erosion

## Key Challenges between 1993 - 2004

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In 2004, due to an absence of a request from the Dept. of Fisheries to reinstate the moratorium on the fishing of sea turtles, this was lifted....

And the turtle fishery was allowed to re-open



- Turtle monitoring activities by community based organizations and the Saint Lucia National Trust on one beach on the island
- Training of volunteers and staff of the Saint Lucia National Trust by Dept. of Fisheries, and marine turtle specialists to monitor nesting turtles
- Collection and simple analysis of nesting data
- Education and awareness primarily via primary and secondary school talks

## **Current efforts at marine turtle conservation**

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# Efforts benefit from a network of support

Supported by:



Federal Ministry  
for the Environment, Nature Conservation,  
Building and Nuclear Safety

based on a decision of the German Bundestag



Organization of  
American States



## WIDECAST

*Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network*



The Nature  
Conservancy   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.®



 **Reef Ecologic**  
For a better planet





# **Training in Turtle Management and MPA Enforcement**

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Monitoring of  
nesting turtles by  
volunteers / Eco  
South Tours, on  
behalf of the Saint  
Lucia National  
Trust





# **PSEPA Marine Turtle Monitoring Programme**

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# Data Collection

## Sea Turtle Nesting Activity 2015 - 2017

Pointe Sable Environmental Protection Area, Saint Lucia

More than **7000** successful hatchlings

**6610** Hawksbills and **551** Leatherbacks were counted during the first three years of the sea turtle nesting monitoring program in PSEPA (2015-2017).

Nests by species  
N=70 Nests



## 70 Nests

How are they distributed?



Unfortunately...

An estimated **840** possible hatchlings were lost due to impacts of beach cleaning and gardening.



An additional estimated **694** hatchlings were lost due to coastal erosion.



At least **1** female was poached

When were sea turtles most actively nesting in 2015-2017?



In partnership with



Infographic design by: © 2018 Doviate Design  
Hawksbill turtle photo by: CC2.0 Rocky Skow, USA 2015  
Data Source: PSEPA Sea Turtle Nesting Monitoring Programme, 2018



# Engaging Stakeholders



Building understanding and appreciation for sea turtles



# Getting youth involved





Department of Agriculture, Fisheries,  
Natural Resources and Cooperatives

CC4FISH  
SAINT LUCIA

Climate Change Adaptation of the  
Eastern Caribbean Fisheries Sector



present

CC4FISH  
Climate Change  
& Fisheries

# Kiddies Fair & Carnival

A day of fun and learning

- Kiddies Fair 10 - 1pm  
SAT. 7th July 2018  
Ave Maria Primary School
- Line Jam 2- 5pm  
Carnival Jump Up around the  
Castries City Centre.

Activities include: Interactive  
sessions, fun games, face painting,  
prizes, arts and craft, costume  
designing and giveaways.





Department of Agriculture, Fisheries,  
Natural Resources and Cooperatives

CC4FISH  
SPAIN 2018

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Public Awareness and  
Education on the  
importance of marine  
resources via popular  
culture





Fisher Learning Exchanges to Improve Appreciation for Marine Protected Areas, improve efficiency of Capture Fisheries and reduce dependence on marine turtle fishery



**Development of Environmental Clubs /Raising Public Awareness /Advocating Sustainable Development**

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**But, the reality is that  
there is a Legal Turtle  
Fishery in Saint Lucia**

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- From October 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Green and Hawksbill turtles are approved for capture and sale.
- There are minimum size limits for both species.
- Harvest of leatherback turtles is prohibited.



PRESS RELEASE – **The public is advised that the Sea Turtle Fishery will be open from Wednesday, October 1st to December 31st, 2014, both days inclusive.**

During the open Sea Turtle Fishery the following regulations are in effect in accordance with the Fisheries Regulations Chapter 7.15 of the Revised Laws of St. Lucia 2008:

- (1) **No person shall:**
  - (a) with any turtle nest, or turtle that is nesting;
  - (b) **Remove Disturb, remove from the fishery waters, expose for sale, sell, purchase, or at any time have in his/her possession any turtle eggs;**
  - (c) **Interfere** from the fishery waters, expose for sale, sell purchase or at any time have in his possession **any undersized turtle;**
  - (d) **Set within 100 meters of the shores of Saint Lucia any net or seine** or any other artifice for the purpose of or with the intention of fishing for, catching or taking any turtle.

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2) In this Regulation:

(a) “turtle” includes the whole or any part of any turtle;

(b) Undersized means a weight less than:

(i) 27.22 kilograms (60lbs) for Hawksbill (*Erectmochelys imbricate*);

(ii) 34.02 kilograms (75lbs) for Green (*Chelonia mydas*) and Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*)

Therefore, the Department would like to appeal to fishers and the public to adhere to the following:

- **the slaughtering of sea turtles are prohibited in public and open areas**
- **the spearing of sea turtles are prohibited**
- **the capture of the leatherback turtle is prohibited**
- Only Hawksbill Turtles weighing 60lbs or more; Green or Loggerhead Turtle weighing 75lbs or more are permitted to be fished.
- any product made from turtle shells or their products are not to be sold or exported, as trade of turtle products are restricted under the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES);

All harvesting activities must cease after the last day of the open period. No person shall be allowed to have in their possession or expose for sale any sea turtle meat or shell after the closure of the harvesting period from January 1st, 2015.

- Data on turtle landings is collected
- There is limited monitoring of the size of turtles that are landed
- The Department of Fisheries does not undertake any population assessment studies

## **During the Open Season**

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**This is the reality.....**

# Other Challenges.....

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# Other Challenges



Poaching



Sand Mining

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Sargassum influx  
and unsustainable  
mitigative  
responses

Coastal Erosion



## *So, what is the Solution? What next?*

- Eco-South Tours will continue to monitor and protect nests and nesting females at the PSPA and advocate for the banning of all turtle harvests.
  - Grande Anse Sea Turtle and Nature Defenders encouraged to commence routine monitoring of one of the major sea turtle nesting sites.
  - New Environmental Club – SALCC- has submitted a proposal to FFI CLP to use Education, Awareness and Advocacy, targeting the public in general, to discourage the fishing and consumption of sea turtles.
  - Talks / Dialogue continues with the senior managers of the DOF to encourage action towards re-instatement of the moratorium.
  - Support is provided to coastal communities to help clean up their beaches of Sargassum.
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