



IAC BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE PRO TEMPORE SECRETARIAT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLES (IAC)

IAC COP4: USA NEW HOST TO IAC PRO TEMPORE SECRETARIAT

We would like to thank Mr. Marco Solano who has provided the IAC with his dedicated services as the Pro Tempore Secretary since the first COP in 2002 and Costa Rica for their generous offer of hosting the IAC Secretariat for the past 7 years. Despite limited economic resources, the IAC has made a lot of progress; it has grown to 13 Parties, providing countries with capacity building opportunities in sea turtle best conservation techniques, a step towards standardizing research methods. In addition, cooperation between Environmental and Fisheries organizations to take joint measures in protecting sea turtles has increased through the signing of various memorandums of understanding and resolutions. The IAC has participated in different international meetings such as the International Sea Turtle Symposium and WHMSI.

Now, the IAC is headed in a new direction. During the recent COP4 held in San Jose in April, 2009 it was agreed to in Resolution CIT-COP4-2009-R4, that the United States will host the PT Secretariat for a term of up to 4 years. During the same COP, Ms. Veronica Caceras was nominated as the new PT Secretary. We would like to welcome her and wish her all the best success during her term.

RESOLUTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND MOU BETWEEN IAC AND CPPS

Given the immediate effects climate change is having on sea turtle habitats, the COP4 approved Resolution "Adaptation of sea turtle habitats to climate change" (CIT-COP4-2009-R5) that resolves to:

URGE the Parties to include marine and coastal habitats on which sea turtles depend in plans and programs for adaptation to climate change;

EXHORT the Parties to strengthen, identify and implement corrective measures relating to adaptation to climate change within management plans, regulatory plans, and protection and conservation programs for sea turtles and their habitat;

REQUEST that the PT Secretariat promote synergies between the Scientific Committee and other relevant expert groups to identify how the IAC Parties can work to adapt to the impacts of climate change on sea turtles and their habitats;

EXHORT the Parties to promote, support and strengthen necessary research and monitoring, including adjusting or updating protocols to improve the scientific bases used to implement adaptation measures to climate change;

PROMOTE technology exchange and technical capacity in addition to collaboration in adaptation of marine and coastal habitats to climate change between the Parties, as well as with non-Party States, other conventions and organizations involved in this topic, and;

INVITE the Parties to identify and execute additional mitigation measures for non-climatic threats as a way to improve the conservation status of sea turtle populations and their habitats in order to improve their condition to respond to the impacts of climate change.

IN BRIEF:

Congratulations to Chile for Passing the IAC! The IAC received unanimous support from the Chilean Senate. The necessary procedures for ratification are underway.

Workshop on standardization and reporting sea turtle data. December 15-18, Guayaquil, Ecuador. In collaboration with the IAC and CPPS under the framework of the Action Plan for the Protection of Marine Environments and Coastal Areas of the Southeast Pacific. Financing for this workshop was kindly provided by the Smithsonian Institute.

The COP4 signed a **Memorandum of Cooperation between the IAC and the Permanent Commission of the South Pacific (CPPS)** (CIT-COP4-2009-R6) that resolves to:

ESTABLISH cooperative linkages within the framework of their general objectives and work plans through specific activities arranged and executed through their Secretaries.

SHARE information which will be mutually beneficial in identifying opportunities for cooperation between the Contracting Parties, Secretariats, and subsidiary bodies of both, focused on the protection and conservation of sea turtles and their habitats.

RECOGNIZE the importance of attending, in the form of observers, meetings organized by each organization in areas of common interest, including Conferences of the Parties and meetings of each Instruments subsidiary bodies.

EXAMINE periodically the implementation of this Memorandum and adopt the necessary measures to facilitate and expand their mechanisms for cooperation.



REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR THE HAWKSBILL TURTLE IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN AND WESTERN ATLANTIC

The workshop was held in September of 2009 in Puerto Morelos, Mexico. The objectives were to evaluate the current status of hawksbill turtles in the Wider Caribbean and Western Atlantic, taking special note of the concerns about the Mexican nesting population as a sign of what may be happening to hawksbill populations in the region, as well as address the threats to the population integrity and the habitat in the area (including capture, overharvesting and illegal trade); to prepare a draft regional conservation strategy, identifying gaps and priorities; and to encourage regional collaboration among governments. The meeting was attended by 57 participants, including the PT Secretariat and members of the IAC, representatives from 21 range States and Territories of CITES parties and the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, 12 invited experts and five observers from NGOs. T

he workshop was divided in two sections: diagnosis of the hawksbill turtle in the region and working group sessions. One group performed a viability analysis of hawksbill turtle populations in the region, in which the participants established which key attributes, including ecological processes, should be maintained to ensure the integrity and health of the hawksbill turtle in the long term. The rest of the participants were split in 5 working groups, based on a general assessment of global threats faced by the hawksbill turtle in the region and agreed in Plenary discussion: **Group 1: Directed take: targeted fisheries, opportunistic fisheries, Group 2: Gillnet bycatch and entanglement in lost gear, Group 3: Habitat deterioration: infrastructure, lights, vegetation removal, Group 4: Habitat deterioration: pollution and non-natural predation and Group 5: Threats related to inadequate regional policies and climate change.** A more detailed analysis of threats was conducted for the hawksbill turtle in the region, using the Conservation Action Planning (CAP) methodology, which takes documental information, statistics and anecdotal knowledge of groups and organizes it in a systematic and orderly way, in order to develop strategies and actions for the conservation of ecosystems or populations of interest. For more information please see www.iacseaturtle.org.

VI MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The VI Meeting of the Scientific Committee was held in San Jose, Costa Rica in October of 2009 focusing on **"Bycatch in coastal gillnets"**. Agreements made in earlier meetings were highlighted, reiterating the importance of active participation by designated representatives in Committee meetings and intersessional working groups, as well as strengthen communication between the Focal Point and designated Committee representative. The Committee recommended that national mechanisms be strengthened, whether a council, committee, network, e-group or other arrangement that facilitates the integration of key stakeholders and the flow and exchange of information at a national level, the need to summarize the *Status of Knowledge of Gillnets and their Interactions with Sea Turtles*, which requires that each Party provides available information and create a useful standard format would be used within the range of the Convention in order to characterize coastal gillnet and trammel net fisheries.

It was also agreed that it is very important to reiterate the recommendation established in "Recommendations for implementing Resolution CIT-COP3-2006-R2: Reduction of the adverse impacts of fisheries on sea turtles" to promote national research programs through: information exchange and training, technology transfer, prepare a project proposal on veterinary aspects (i.e., rehabilitation techniques, necropsies, care in captivity, liberation, etc.), in order to provide training and for exchange of information and technical experiences between Party countries, securing financing if necessary, improve the electronic library on the Convention's website, send the COP a recommendation addressed to Mexico on the problem of incidental capture of *Caretta caretta* in the southern waters of Baja California stating the urgency of implementing conservation measures, create an intersessional working group to review and organize, in a concise manner, the work of the V Committee meeting which provided suggestions related to the format and instructions on how to complete the Annual Report forms. This working group will synthesize the information so that the Parties can see the value of submitting them and the analyses that the Committee has been able to do and to work on updating the Convention's database.

IN PROGRESS:

The Working Group on the Legal Framework of the Convention and Permanent Secretariat (CIT-COP4-2009-R2) has been working throughout the year analyzing and harmonizing different viewpoints on this topic with the purpose of finding the most appropriate methods to confront the aspects relating to the operation of a Permanent Secretariat, including its legal status, contracting personnel and the contributions of the Parties. These recommendations will be presented to the Focal Points to be discussed at the COP5.

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