



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Southwest Fisheries Center Honolulu Laboratory  
2570 Delo St. • Honolulu, Hawaii 96822-2396

June 8, 1987

F/SWC:GHB

MEMORANDUM FOR: William G. Gilmartin

FROM: George H. Balazs

SUBJECT: Results of recent turtle tagging at Palaaau,  
Molokai, with fisherman Ed Medeiros

Service order 40-JJNF-7-070 issued to Ed Medeiros was fulfilled during the period June 2-4, 1987 when Robert Forsyth and I traveled to Molokai to tag green turtles incidentally caught during "bullpen" net fishing. A total of 27 turtles were captured, 4 of which had been previously tagged in the same general area over the past 4 years. One of these turtles that measured only 52 cm was extensively afflicted with tumors over its eyes and front flippers. No tumors were present on the animal when it was last seen 3 years ago. Ed Medeiros indicated that several other turtles with tumors had recently been captured and released, in contrast with past years when none had ever been found. From these observations, it would appear that the incidence of this disease is increasing in range within Hawaii, as well as in magnitude.

Our turtle tagging work on Molokai in collaboration with Ed Medeiros and State Aquatic Biologist Bill Puleloa constitutes the most cost efficient, productive and worthwhile research of green turtles in foraging pastures that we have initiated in the main Hawaiian Islands. In spite of this fact, due to travel restrictions and funding constraints we have only been able to visit Molokai to do this work about once every 18 months. It would be highly advantageous to increase this field schedule to three times a year. I hope that this will be possible next fiscal year.

On a related note, Ed Medeiros is planning to construct new panels of bullpen net to replace some of his existing gear. He plans to sell the older nets which, due to numerous small holes, are now much less efficient at herding fish. However, the nets are still very effective for herding and live-capture of turtles. Ed wanted to know if we would be interested in purchasing these nets. As yet, no price has been quoted. I want to recommend that we seriously consider buying the nets for the following reasons: 1) they have considerable potential for use in turtle research activities at several select sites here on Oahu; and 2) if someone else purchases them for commercial fishing on Molokai, the new owner may not be nearly as charitable toward sea turtles as Ed has been in releasing them from his net. Ed's bullpen net is somewhat unique to Hawaii in that there are only two like it in the entire State.

