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CHINA-USA 2014 WORKSHOP IN HAWAII: MOVING FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE WITH TRUST AND FRIENDSHIP TO ADVANCE SEA TURTLE RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

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A pioneering China/USA workshop on sea turtles was convened in Honolulu, Hawaii on 25-29 August 2014 under the Living Marine Resources Panel Initiative of NOAA and the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences. This unprecedented workshop was attended by scientists from USA government agencies along with top researchers and sea turtle conservationists from throughout the China region. The meeting was diverse, including oral presentations by all participants, a necropsy practicum where everyone received hands-on experience conducting necropsies of Hawaiian sea turtles, field outings to ocean-capture and tag live green turtles and observe basking turtles in the wild, and an instructive visit to Sea Life Park to view sea turtle research, educational displays and husbandry facilities. During an interactive session near the end of the workshop, participants mutually developed a collection of 14 recommended next steps designed to foster continuing dialogue, trust, and collaboration. These action items consisted of: Implementation of ways to have better and increased communications; Creation of a China/USA Sea Turtle Working Group with workshop participants as the founding members; Convene again in a subsequent workshop somewhere in the China region during 2015/2016; Establish a directory with email, phone, Wechat and other contact information for digital communications; Create a list of other sea turtle researchers and conservationists that would be good resources for additional China/USA efforts; Explore funding opportunities within China for more research and material support for sea turtle work; Create a Visiting Scientist/Scholar Exchange Program; Promote enhanced collaborations among scientists within the China region; Identify pathology laboratory access and capacity within the China region; Explore Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong funding for sea turtles and a sea turtle workshop; Identify key players to help foster China region collaboration by determining what interests them; Inquire from within China about China/USA consulate cooperation; Propose general wildlife health and disease workshops for the China region; and Continue building a literature list of all China region sea turtle publications and reports. The China/USA Sea Turtle Workshop laid the foundation for participants to continue to work together with trust and friendship to advance sea turtle research and conservation in the China region. A proposal has now been submitted to support a 2015 workshop in the China region.