



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
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December 6, 1988 F/SWC2:GHB

MEMORANDUM FOR: William G. Gilmartin
FROM: George H. Balazs
SUBJECT: Recommendations and options for green turtle monitoring and tagging at French Frigate Shoals for the 1989 (year 17) nesting season

This memo is a continuation of the one I prepared for you on September 30, 1988 dealing with the same general topic. In that earlier memo I did not provide specific research recommendations for the 1989 nesting season, with the exception of saying that the scope and intensity of monitoring/tagging should be reduced and more strictly controlled, and a more comprehensive system needs to be instituted for professionally screening volunteers and others sent for isolated turtle work at French Frigate Shoals.

My additional recommendations, along with certain options, are provided in outline form at this time.

1. For the uninhabited islands at French Frigate Shoals, nighttime monitoring of nesting turtles should be confined to East Island, as the essential long-term study site identified in the recovery plan. No nighttime monitoring should be done on Whale-Skate.
2. On Tern Island, nighttime monitoring of nesting turtles should be conducted, but only if proper personnel are available without being overworked, and then only at a level of monitoring that is sufficient to obtain the tagging and census data required (as at East Island).
3. Consecutive nightly monitoring at East Island should be conducted for not less than 30 days, nor more than 60 days, depending upon transportation to and from French Frigate Shoals, and the number of proper personnel available to do the work on a low stress, efficient, effective, and harmonious basis.
4. At least one, and preferably all, of the personnel recruited and/or hired to do the nighttime monitoring at East Island should have a successful record of previously doing this job. Vanessa Gauger, Phil Dye, and Sheila Moriarty rank high on my list in this regard.



5. The person that has overall responsibility for turtle monitoring at French Frigate Shoals in 1989 must have clear authority over all science and research aspects of the project. To be responsible for a project without having authority over it seldom works to anyone's satisfaction, according to a career training seminar I recently attended. For the 1988 NMFS/FWS cooperative monitoring study, we both believed that I was responsible for the work, and had authority over it,---only to discovered when it was nearly over that such was apparently not the case from the FWS perspective.

6. Within the limits of my own professional abilities and the financial resources available to me, systematic data on nesting at French Frigate Shoals has been collected each and every year since 1973. Since 1980 this effort has, of course, been housed with NMFS. For 1989, there are three choices available for accomplishing this critical work: a) do it ourselves with minimal help from FWS, as in the past; b) do it in collaboration with FWS, as was first tried this year; and c) inform FWS that we will supply the tags but they will have full responsibility for the work in 1989, as reflected by the recovery plan and the 1978 NMFS/FWS Memorandum of Understanding relating to sea turtles. At this point, I have no clear preference for how it is done (i.e., a, b, or c of the above). Such a choice is heavily dependent on financial and personnel resources and on the prevailing attitude of FWS personnel, both in Honolulu and at Tern Island. Telephone calls I have received in recent weeks have shown little understanding by FWS for the information and views I provided to you in my memo of September 30, 1988.

On a separate but nevertheless related matter, I would like to "reopen", at least on paper, the East Island clean-up project that NMFS initiated and significantly funded, and we both personally labored for a week in 1980. As you know, eight years later the cement chunks that were piled up from demolition of the old USCG foundation still remain on East Island. It was never the intention that this debris stay there, but rather that FWS, as managing authority of the refuge, have it removed through some cooperative plan with a DOD agency. To my knowledge, no plan has ever been formulated or seriously pursued. The history of the clean-up appears to have been completely forgotten at FWS, undoubtedly due to

personnel changes. Instead of viewing the pile of debris as a yet to be completed habitat enhancement project, it is periodically commented, or joked upon, with the negative connotation that NMFS is somehow responsible (indeed should be blamed) for its existence. Something clearly needs to be done to realign this attitude, and finish the project once and for all.