

## Appendix Two

**Resolutions Of The First Meeting And Workshop Of The Regional  
Marine Turtle Conservation Program (RMTCP)  
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 13-15 August 1990)**

**1. Resolution On Japanese Bekko Trade**

Recognising that the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) is traditionally valuable for the countries of the South Pacific region,

noting that there has been a significant decline in populations of the hawksbill turtle in many places as a result of trade in scales of the hawksbill (known as bekko),

further noting that Japan is the largest importer of bekko in the world and that Japan has increased its imports of bekko from the South Pacific in recent years,

we urge the Government of Japan to assist the conservation of hawksbill turtles in the South Pacific region by considering a significant reduction in its imports of bekko from the South Pacific.

**2. Resolution On Bekko Terminology**

Noting that Japan is the major importer of the raw scales of the hawksbill turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata* and that import consignments of these raw scales are identified as "bekko" in Japanese trade statistics,

further noting that national trade statistics currently use a variety of different and confusing terminology for bekko or do not have a distinct category for this material,

in order to better understand the trade factor adversely affecting the conservation of turtles, there is a need for a standardised nomenclature for export consignments of the raw scales of the hawksbill turtle,

we urge governments of the South Pacific Region to adopt as a standard the word "bekko" when referring to export consignments of the raw scales of the hawksbill turtle and to adopt a unique category for this material in their trade statistics.

**3. Resolution On Turtle Exploitation In Indonesia**

Recognising that green turtles are a highly migratory species and that available tag recapture data indicates movement of green turtles between the South Pacific Region and the South East Asian Region,

noting that there are very heavy levels of turtle harvesting and exploitation occurring in the waters surrounding Indonesia and that the Bali Turtle Market is one of the largest in South East Asia.

we urge the Government of Indonesia to:

- (i) note our concern at the level of commercial trade in green turtles centred around Bali;
- (ii) enter into discussions at the regional level to develop cooperative arrangements for the management and conservation of green turtles in the South East Asian Region; and
- (iii) cooperate with the countries of the South Pacific Region on inter-regional initiatives for marine turtle conservation and management.

**4. Resolution On Regional Cooperation On Turtle Conservation**

Noting the resolution of the Fourth South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Protected Areas calling for the endorsement of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program by the SPREP IGM Meeting,

further noting the recent progress made with the development of a regional cooperative approach to the conservation and management of marine turtles in the South Pacific Region through the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program,

again recognising the highly migratory behaviour of marine turtles and the cultural and subsistence importance of these animals to the people of the countries of the South Pacific,

encouraging close liaison between conservation agencies and education institutions in designing curricula.

#### 6. Conservation Measures

6.1 To identify important breeding and feeding sites and encourage countries to protect and manage these sites.

To be achieved by the Project Team Leader and in consultation with the Project Leader Team developing a list of critical and key habitats (both terrestrial and marine) for marine turtle populations within the region and encouraging countries through the provision of technical expertise and/or financial assistance, to prepare and implement plans for the protection and management of these habitats, in consultation with traditional landowners.

6.2 To develop applicable guidelines for the management of turtle harvesting for incorporation into national marine turtle legislation.

To be achieved by encouraging and supporting countries to:

- a) survey turtle nesting sites and to monitor all forms of impact including traditional/subsistence harvesting, local/national/regional/international levels of commercial exploitation; incidental catch through fisheries interactions and the impact of pollution or habitat degradation (both terrestrial and marine);
- b) identify trends and to set realistic guidelines for traditional utilisation, and
- c) encourage countries to take where necessary specific action to reduce or minimise these impacts.

#### 7. Conservation Education/Publicity Programs

7.1 To develop an education program promoting the conservation of marine turtles in the region.

To be achieved by the Project Team Leader and in consultation with the Project Team coordinating the implementation of a regional education program on marine turtle conservation, and assisting individual countries in the production and translation of various educational materials into local languages.

7.2 To promote community involvement by non government conservation groups, church groups etc. in development of local or community projects involving marine turtles (e.g. nest protection, recording traditional uses for turtles); and for the distribution of educational material to local communities.

To be achieved by the Project Team Leader and in consultation with the Project Team coordinating in consultation with government agencies, a program of community involvement through the provision of technical and/or financial assistance and educational materials to community groups.

#### 8. International Efforts

8.1 To encourage countries to accede to international and regional species conservation agreements (especially CITES) and to review the need for specific provisions relating to marine turtle conservation in regional agreements.

To be achieved by the provision of technical expertise and financial assistance to enable countries to establish administrative procedures required to accede to and implement international agreements.

8.2 To participate in international efforts promoting the conservation, management and wise use of marine turtles.

To be achieved by the regional program linking in with marine turtle programs in other regions through liaison with the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group, the UNEP East Asian Seas Program, the IUCN/WWF TRAFFIC Network and other non-government organisations.

8.3 To encourage the exchange of information and development of joint conservation programs between "range" countries within the region.

To be achieved by those countries entering into bilateral/multilateral agreements in establishing the framework for the development of long-term management and conservation strategies for shared marine resources.

recognising also that the conservation and management of marine turtles require both national initiatives and regional cooperation,

recommends that consideration be given to the negotiation of a regional agreement for the conservation of threatened migratory marine species, particularly marine turtles, in the form of a protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Environment and Natural resources of the South Pacific (the SPREP convention) by the Parties to that Convention.

#### 5. Resolution Recognising Dr Archie Carr's Work

Recalling that the late Dr Archie Carr travelled to New Caledonia in 1979 to participate in and offer

encouragement to an SPC sponsored workshop on marine turtles in the Pacific region,

recognising that Dr Carr's life-long work on the conservation and research of marine turtles in the Caribbean constitutes the foundation for many similar work worldwide,

realising that Dr Carr provided valuable assistance and inspiration to the initiation of certain marine turtle conservation activities in the Pacific,

therefore be it resolved by the Steering Committee that Dr Carr's significant contributions to marine turtle conservation be gratefully acknowledged, and that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to Mrs Carr and the Archie Carr Centre for Sea Turtle Research in Gainesville, Florida, USA.

### Resolutions Of The Second Meeting And Workshop Of The Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program (RMTCP) (Noumea, New Caledonia, 12-14 August 1991)

#### 1. Resolution On Turtle Exploitation In Indonesia

Recognising that green turtles are a highly migratory species and that available tag recapture data indicates movement of green turtles between the South Pacific Region and the South East Asian Region,

noting that there are very heavy levels of turtle harvesting and exploitation occurring in the waters surrounding Indonesia and that the Bali Turtle Market is one of the largest in South East Asia, the Steering Committee of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program,

urges the Government of the Republic of Indonesia to:

- (i) note its concern at the level of commercial trade in green turtles centred around Bali;
- (ii) enter into discussions at the regional level to develop cooperative arrangements for the management and conservation of green turtles in the South East Asian Region; and
- (iii) cooperate with the countries of the South Pacific Region on inter-regional initiatives for marine turtle conservation and management.

#### 2. Resolution On Regional Cooperation On Turtle Conservation

Noting the resolution of the Fourth South Pacific Conference on National Parks and Protected Areas calling for the endorsement of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program by the 1990 SPREP IGM Meeting,

further noting the recent progress made with the development of a regional cooperative approach to the conservation and management of marine turtles in the South Pacific Region through the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program,

again recognising the highly migratory behaviour of marine turtles and the cultural and subsistence importance of these animals to the people of the countries of the South Pacific,

recognising also that the conservation and management of marine turtles require both national initiatives and international and regional cooperation,

recommends

- (i) that consideration be given to the negotiation of a regional agreement for the conservation of threatened migratory marine species, particularly marine turtles, in the form of a protocol to the Convention for the Protection

of Environment and Natural resources of the South Pacific (the SPREP convention) by the Parties to that Convention.

- (ii) that the island countries of the South Pacific region give strong consideration to accession to the Washington Convention (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora - CITES) which provides for the protection of five out of the six species of marine turtles occurring in the South Pacific.

### 3. Resolution On Japanese Bekko Trade

Recognising that the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) is traditionally valuable for the countries of the South Pacific region,

noting that Japan is the largest importer of hawksbill turtle scales (known as bekko) in the world and that Japan has increased its imports of bekko from the South Pacific in recent years,

further noting that Japan has recently announced that it will stop importing bekko at the end of 1992.

The Steering Committee of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program:

Congratulates the Government of Japan on its decision to end its imports of bekko, which will greatly assist the conservation of hawksbill turtles in the South Pacific region,

urges the Government of Japan to remove it reservations on the Appendix 1 listing of sea turtles under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as soon as possible.

### 4. Resolution On Arnarvon Wildlife Sanctuary In The Solomon Islands

Recognising that the Arnarvon Island Group in the Isabel Province, Solomon Islands is one of the largest and most important nesting sites for the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in the Solomon Islands, and a significant rookery for this species in the South Pacific region,

noting that there has been a decline in the number of hawksbill turtles nesting in this area in recent years and that hunting for commercial trade is likely to be a major contributor to this decline,

further noting that a wildlife sanctuary was previously established in the Arnarvon Islands group but now no longer exists,

acknowledging that the Solomon Islands has recently undertaken turtle conservation activities (with the support of SPREP) including turtle population surveys, education and the drafting of new legislation to control turtle exploitation.

The Steering Committee of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program:

Expresses its support for turtle conservation activities undertaken by the Solomon Islands and supports a continuation of these efforts,

endorses re-establishment of the Arnarvon Wildlife Sanctuary with the full support of the traditional landowners and national and provincial authorities,

urges that, as a urgent priority, international and regional conservation and development agencies assist the Solomon Islands to proceed with the establishment of the Arnarvon Wildlife Sanctuary as soon as possible.

### 5. Resolutions On Turtle Conservation In New Caledonia

Considering that New Caledonia and Dependencies is an important breeding ground for the following species of marine turtles:

Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)  
Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)  
Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*)

also considering that statutory protection for marine turtles already exists in New Caledonia, the Steering Committee of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program:

Urges 'Association pour la sauvegarde de la nature neo-caledonienne (ASSNC) to persevere with its research program and information campaign for the conservation of marine turtles,

supports all action taken by ASNNC with the territorial authorities and the research bodies present in New Caledonia to combat poaching and secure the strict enforcement of statutory provisions relating to marine turtle conservation.

### 6. Resolution On Information On Fiji Turtle Conservation

Recognising that Michael Guinea has surveyed the distribution of marine turtles in Fiji in the late 1970's, using his own resources,

noting that little detailed data on the distribution of marine turtles in Fiji is available in published reports.

The Steering Committee of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program:

Invites Mr Guinea to submit a formal report of his Fiji turtle surveys to SPREP for consideration for publication.

#### 7. Resolution Recognising Mr Peter Thomas

Recalling that Mr Peter Thomas has played a significant and fundamental role in successfully initiating and implementing the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program,

noting, with regret, that Mr Thomas will be leaving the Program to undertake professional pursuits elsewhere in the South Pacific region.  
The Steering Committee of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program:

Resolves that Mr Thomas be gratefully thanked for his substantial contributions to the Program, and that he be wished continues success in his future endeavours.

#### 8. Resolution Recognising Mr Alan Banner

Recalling that during the early 1970's American Peace Corps Volunteer Mr Alan Banner vigorously worked at the village level on behalf of the conservation of marine turtles in the South Pacific region,

noting with deep regret that Mr Banner lost his life as a result of a fatal shark attack while swimming ashore to conduct marine turtle conservation duties at Nuutele Island in Western Samoa.

The Steering Committee of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program:

Resolves that Mr Banners' work be gratefully recognised and remembered.

## Development of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program (RMTCP)

C Sylvia Spring

Present address: Marine & Coastal Section, Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories, Canberra, ACT

Previous address: Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Canberra, ACT

### Introduction

In Australia six species of marine turtles are protected under Fisheries and Nature Conservation legislation both at the Commonwealth, State and Territory levels. Provisions exist which allow the traditional harvest of turtles for food and for traditional purposes but not for sale. In addition Australia has been a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 1976 and all exports and imports of turtles/turtle products into and out of Australia are prohibited.

This situation leads many people to believe that Australian populations of marine turtles are secure and indeed at the moment they probably are. However available data from tag recapture programs indicate that Australian populations of green, hawksbill and loggerhead turtles migrate into South East Asian and South Pacific waters (See Fig.1). Australia is aware that the conservation of Australian populations of marine turtles cannot be achieved solely at the national level and that regional efforts involving range countries are essential for the long term survival of marine turtles.

Of particular concern is the knowledge that both hawksbill and green turtle populations migrate to countries where they are harvested for subsistence and commercial purposes. There is a need to understand, quantify, manage and monitor these and other impacts, such as incidental catch, to enable the setting into place of effective long-term management and conservation strategies.

It was with this in mind and with knowledge of and active participation in existing regional mechanisms/forums that Australia was able to successfully support, along with other South Pacific nations, the development of a Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program under the direction of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP).

### Development of the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program (RMTCP)

The Second Intergovernmental Meeting of SPREP in New Caledonia in 1988 endorsed a recommendation that "a project for the

*coordination and integration of regional marine turtle management initiatives be developed which will focus on the promotion of field conservation activities, the development of supporting legislation and public awareness programs and the development of regional arrangements for marine turtle management".* The meeting further requested the UNEP representative to bring this resolution to the attention of the South East Asian Regional Seas Program with a view to seeking inter regional cooperation on this issue.

A Working Group was convened at the Fourth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas held in Vanuatu in 1989 to develop an outline for such a regional marine turtle program. As convener of this Working Group, I was requested by SPREP to develop prior to the Conference, the first draft of the Regional Marine Turtle Management and Conservation Program (Spring 1989) which provided the basis for discussion in the Working Group.

The Working Group consisted of representatives from CITES, Greenpeace, TRAFFIC, the World Wildlife Fund, Australia (WWF) and country delegates from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Western Samoa, Fiji, Australia, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The revised draft RMTCP document was tabled and accepted by the Fourth South Pacific Nature Conference which made the following recommendation "this Conference adopts the regional marine turtle program for implementation within the framework of the SPREP; recommends that aid agencies provide funding and support for the implementation of the regional marine turtle program, recommends that the next Intergovernmental meeting of SPREP endorse the regional marine turtle program and urges that the UNEP East Asian Seas Program note the regional marine turtle program developed by this Conference with consideration given to the adoption of a similar program, and to interregional cooperation between SPREP and the East Asian Seas Region on the subject".

At the SPREP Steering Committee which met immediately following the Conference the RMTCP

was discussed in the context of the SPREP Work Program. The SPREP Steering Committee asked the SPREP Secretariat to include the RMTCP in the SPREP Work Program which enabled SPREP to immediately begin looking for extra budgetary funding for the RMTCP.

#### Objective of the RMTCP

The overall aim of the RMTCP is "to conserve marine turtles and their cultural, economic and nutritional values for the coastal peoples of the countries served by the SPREP".

Implicit in this carefully thought out aim is a recognition of the importance of turtles in the lives of the peoples of Pacific Island countries. The most common marine turtle species found in the region are green and hawksbill turtles which have been hunted for generations to provide the basic needs of traditional subsistence communities eg food, tools, decorations and items for trade.

By endorsing this aim, Australia recognises that the underlying philosophy of the RMTCP is to conserve marine turtles by monitoring and attempting to manage their use in a way that is ecologically sustainable rather than to promote the complete protection of marine turtles.

#### Elements of the RMTCP

In summary the RMTCP comprises the following elements: Information Gathering, Institution Building, Management/Research, Traditional Knowledge, Conservation Measures, Education/Publicity, International Efforts. For more detail see the RMTCP document which is appended to this paper (Attachment 1).

#### Implementation of the RMTCP

As set out in the RMTCP document (Attachment 1) SPREP convened a Steering Committee to plan the implementation of the RMTCP. The Steering Committee consisted of Ms S Spring ANPWS, Dr C Limpus QNPWS, Dr G Balazs USNMFS and representatives from Pacific Island countries likely to be involved in the implementation of the RMTCP.

The First Meeting of the Steering Committee was held in New Caledonia on 13-15 August 1990 and was attended by representatives from Australia, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Palau. In addition observers from Greenpeace and TRAFFIC International attended the meeting.

The second meeting of the Steering Committee was held in New Caledonia on 12-14 August 1991, and was attended by representatives from participating countries, Marshall Islands, FSM, PNG, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Palau and French Polynesia. Recommendations from both meetings are at Attachment 2.

#### Funding of the RMTCP

SPREP has an agreement with the Canadian Government through the Canadian South Pacific Ocean Development Project of the International Centre for Ocean Development to undertake a joint project for the implementation of the RMTCP over a period of three years (1990-1992 inclusive). The total funding available was \$CAN 343,000 of which \$CAN 57,000 is for database development, \$CAN 180,000 for population survey and monitoring activities and \$CAN 30,000 for education activities.

In addition the Australian Government as part of its annual extra-budgetary contribution to SPREP committed \$50,000 towards the RMTCP for 1990 only.

Additional in-kind support for project activities under the RMTCP has been extended by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS), the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service (QNPWS), the US National Marine Fisheries Service and Greenpeace (SPREP 1991).

#### Australian Contribution to the RMTCP (In-kind)

In addition to the development of the draft RMTCP document, Australia has provided a convenor for the Special Marine Turtle Working Group at the Fourth South Pacific Conference, and specialist marine turtle advice to SPREP. Australia has also provided in-kind assistance through the ANPWS for the setting-up of a regional database at SPREP containing census information, tagging and capture information, migration information and legislation, utilisation and traditional information. A turtle bibliographic database has also been established with over 500 records to date.

Under this project two posters have been produced, one advertising for turtle tag return information and the other promoting marine turtle conservation (Geermans, 1992). Greenpeace (Australia) have produced a turtle identification poster for the RMTCP.

### Conclusions

The commitment of Pacific Island countries to establish the RMTCP under SPREP was a significant breakthrough for marine turtle conservation in the Region. SPREP have done an admirable job in seeking and attracting funding for the first three years of the RMTCP. With this funding and with the in-kind assistance from a number of participating agencies, considerable progress has been made in the establishment of a regional database, generation of educational materials and the provision of funding and specialist advice and support for marine turtles surveys in participating South Pacific countries such as the Solomon Islands. However for these initial efforts to be of longer term benefit there is a need for the RMTCP to continue beyond the initial three years for which funds have been obtained.

It is hoped that the progress made in the first three years will provide the focus for attracting additional funding for the RMTCP. A matter which will require further consideration is the concept of a project coordinator for the RMTCP as originally envisaged under the RMTCP document. I believe that the appointment of a project

coordinator will be crucial to the long term success of the program and for the long term conservation of marine turtles in the South Pacific Region. Given the recorded migrations of marine turtles from Australian waters into the South Pacific and into South East Asian waters, the success of regional marine turtle conservation programs such as this one are crucial for the long-term conservation of marine turtles in Australian waters.

### References

- Geermans, Suzanne H 1992. Summary of tasks undertaken for the RMTCP. Internal report to the ANPWS.
- SPREP, 1991. Report of the First Meeting and Workshop of the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme, Noumea, New Caledonia, 13-15 August 1990.
- Spring, C. Sylvia 1989. A Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program. Information Paper 7, Fourth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, Vanuatu, 4-12 September 1989.



## Attachment One

## A Regional Marine Turtle Conservation And Management Program For The South Pacific Region

Developed by the Marine Turtle Working Group at the Fourth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas (Port Vila, Vanuatu, 4-12 September 1989)  
and adopted by that Conference

### Introduction

It is now generally accepted that the conservation of migratory species such as marine turtles cannot be achieved solely by conservation measures at the national level. International and/ or regional cooperative efforts that involve 'range' countries are necessary to ensure the long term survival of marine turtles and other migratory animals. In recognition of this situation and the importance of marine turtles as a cultural and subsistence resource of the peoples of the South Pacific, the second Intergovernmental Meeting of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) which was held in Noumea, New Caledonia, 27 June - 1 July 1988, endorsed the recommendation 'that a project for the coordination and integration of regional marine turtle management initiatives be developed which will focus on the promotion of field conservation activities, the development of supporting legislation and public education programs and the development of regional arrangements for marine turtle management.'

The meeting further requested the representative of UNEP, which is the Secretariat of the Action Plan for the Protection and the Development of the East Asian Seas Region, to bring the problem of marine turtle management to the attention of the forthcoming Intergovernmental Meeting convened under that Action Plan with a view to seeking inter-regional cooperation between SPREP and the East Asian Seas Region on the subject. To implement the recommendation SPREP sought the assistance of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service with the development of a draft regional program for consideration by a special purpose working group at the Fourth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas. Utilising assistance from the CITES Secretariat for the conference, a number of people with regional experience in aspects of turtle conservation, management and research were drawn together to finalise the proposed program, which was subsequently endorsed for inclusion in the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the South Pacific region adopted by the Conference. A phased work program will be developed for the overall program and funding support for its implementation will be sought from appropriate

international conservation and development assistance agencies. The overall implementation of this program will be coordinated by SPREP. It must be recognised that the success of the program will also require the cooperation and support of the member countries of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program and other regional and international institutions as well as SPREP. Of particular importance is the support and involvement of the many national and regional marine resource management agencies either located or working within the South Pacific region.

### Species Occurrence And Distribution

Six of the seven species of marine turtles found in the world today are found in the South Pacific Region. They are the Green turtle *Chelonia mydas*, the Hawksbill turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*, the Loggerhead turtle *Caretta caretta*, the Olive or Pacific Ridley *Lepidochelys olivacea*, the Flatback turtle *Chelonia depressa* and the Leatherback turtle *Dermochelys coriacea*. Of these, the flatback turtle has a very restricted distribution in northern Australian and southern Papua New Guinean waters. The distribution of the remaining five species of marine turtles in the South Pacific region is shown in Table 1.

The most abundant, widespread and migratory marine turtles in the South Pacific region are the green and hawksbill turtles. Although the loggerhead turtle appears to be less widespread and abundant than the green and the hawksbill, tag recoveries indicate that Australian nesting loggerheads migrate to feeding grounds in Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia.

Tag recoveries from existing mark-recapture programs (Figure 1) provide an indication of the movements of marine turtles throughout the South Pacific region. More intensive tagging programs throughout the South Pacific region will provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of marine turtle movements.

### **Socio-Economic Importance Of Marine Turtles To The South Pacific Peoples**

In areas where they are abundant, green and hawksbill turtles have been hunted for centuries to supply the basic needs of the traditional subsistence village community e.g. food, tools, decoration and items for trade. Hunting practices which have evolved over many years represent the oral knowledge of the village relating to the turtle, where it lives, its habits and the most efficient ways of hunting it. The complex social interactions involved in observing the many rules, rituals and traditional ownership patterns contribute to make the hunt an organized and disciplined affair and the consumption of turtles a special social event in the village. Where they occur, these traditional patterns of capture and consumption have helped to regulate the exploitation of marine turtles.

### **Pressures On Marine Turtle Populations**

In many areas in the South Pacific today, easier access to natural resources and the increasing trend to sell marine turtles for cash in town markets has resulted in many situations where turtle exploitation is unregulated. If unchecked the depletion and possible disappearance of the resource and its economic, social and cultural values could occur. However, if wisely managed, it should be possible to combine conservation goals with sustainable levels of harvest of marine turtles for the benefit of the present and future generations.

The IUCN Red Data Book lists the green and hawksbill turtles as endangered. The primary cause of decline in green turtle populations is the systematic commercial exploitation of eggs and adults. While the green turtle has been traditionally used as a food source, the introduction of cash economies, access to improved technology and the increase in human populations are factors which could raise subsistence harvests to levels which are no longer sustainable. The primary cause for the widespread depletion of hawksbill turtles is the commercial trade in raw tortoiseshell and tortoiseshell products.

### **Overall Aim Of The Proposed Regional Marine Turtle Conservation And Management Program**

The overall aim of the proposed Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program is:

To conserve marine turtles and their cultural, economic and nutritional values for the coastal peoples of the countries served by the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP).

### **Objectives**

The Regional Program has the following objectives:

#### **1. Implementation**

1.1 To implement the Program by:

- a) seeking the agreement and support of the SPREP Member countries and action by the governments and peoples of the region for an integrated long-term program to conserve marine turtles, and
- b) establishing a Project Team Leader and a Project Team based in the South Pacific to implement the objectives of this program.

To be achieved by this Conference:

- a) endorsing the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation and Management Program, and its adoption as an element of the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the South Pacific region, and
- b) recommending the inclusion of the program into the SPREP Work Program.

#### **2. Information**

2.1 To develop a regional database for marine turtles.

To be achieved by the establishment and maintenance of an ongoing regional database and information network for marine turtles. This database should include existing databases on marine turtles, if relevant to the region (e.g. database held at the World Conservation Monitoring Centre).

2.2 To review all previous work carried out on marine turtles in the region with the aim of identifying the current status of research and management efforts in the region.

To be achieved by contracting a consultant (consultants) to carry out a literature search of published and unpublished material, reports and articles, and to interview government agencies and marine turtle researchers who have worked/are working in the South Pacific region. This information to be included into the regional database.

2.3 To contact government agencies within the region with the responsibility for the management and/or conservation of marine turtles with the aim of:

- a) identifying existing legislation, protected areas and enforcement mechanisms relating to marine

turtles in the region, and b) determining existing gaps in management coverage.

To be achieved by contracting a consultant to collect the information required and identifying priorities for action. This information to be included in the regional database.

### 3. Institution Building

3.1 To assist countries, where necessary, to develop appropriate legal, policy and administrative measures for the preparation and implementation of national marine turtle conservation and management programs.

To be achieved by regional/international funding agencies making specific grants to governments to assist them to establish adequately staffed and funded long-term programs which are consistent with the regional priorities for the continued survival of the marine turtle resource in the region.

3.2 To provide training and education opportunities for appropriate personnel involved with marine turtle conservation in the region, as requested by governments.

To be achieved by coordinating a regional training program involving institutions, local community groups (e.g. NGO's, traditional landowners) and government agencies.

### 4. Management Related Research

4.1 To gather reliable data on the population status and distribution of marine turtle species occurring in the region. To be achieved by:

- a) the establishment of a series of baseline survey sites in countries and along important migratory paths throughout the region,
- b) the encouragement, financial support and regional coordination of tagging programs including standardisation of tags, centralisation of return address, publicity and record keeping; and
- c) the identification of genetically discrete populations of marine turtles in the region.

4.2 To encourage continuing research on all aspects of sea turtle biology (e.g. growth rates, life histories, population dynamics, mortality rates); management techniques, and the socio-economic, cultural and nutritional values of marine turtles for traditional communities.

To be achieved by seeking the cooperation of funding agencies to give greater priority to funding research on marine turtles and on the

development of effective management techniques for the conservation of marine turtles, both within and outside the region.

4.3 To investigate ways of obtaining information on marine turtle activity in isolated areas.

To be achieved by:

a) investigating existing resource surveillance activities such as overflights, coast watching, and fishery patrol vessels, by evaluating the potential for integrating surveillance of key turtle habitats in isolated areas into these activities, and

b) by recommending implementation measures to relevant government agencies.

### 5. Traditional Knowledge

5.1 To encourage the development and implementation of national programs to document traditional knowledge and the socio-economic importance of the hunting and consumption of marine turtles.

To be achieved by regional and national agencies undertaking marine turtle projects within countries to collect this information using cost-effective means (e.g. questionnaires and postal surveys such as those developed by Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu).

5.2 To promote the inclusion of relevant traditional ecological knowledge in conservation and management strategies for marine turtles.

To be achieved by encouraging governments to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge, established rights and traditional tenure systems into the design of marine turtle conservation and management programs.

5.3 To promote the involvement of traditional landowners and traditional resource users in the management of the marine turtle resource.

To be achieved by facilitating joint participation in management decisions by government authorities, traditional landowners and traditional resource users.

5.4 To encourage the incorporation of appropriate traditional ecological information relating to marine turtles into curricula and educational activities for schools.

To be achieved by encouraging educational institutions to design projects relating to traditional information on marine turtles, and