



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service
Virgin Islands National Park
1300 Cruz Bay Creek
St. John, Virgin Islands 00830



June 5, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I have met with David Teichmann and we have discussed his Proyecto Tigre Salvaje. To begin with, I cannot commend David more highly for his work and efforts to protect and preserve the sea turtles of Panama. It is through grass-roots efforts such as David's that the hope and future of many of the world's sea turtle populations lay. While many governments have regulations protecting sea turtles, they are usually restricted in what they can do to actually enforce those regulations due to lack of funding and personnel. Therefore we have to rely on hard working, dedicated individuals and volunteers to engage in basic management efforts that will ensure the continuation of sea turtle populations in many countries around the world. These people often have to work under extremely adverse climatic and political conditions and their perseverance is a testament to the depth of their concerns for the species they are working with.

For sea turtles, the easiest and most basic management action that can be taken is to protect the eggs and nests. For without egg protection, there can be no hatchlings and thus no adult turtles to carry on the species. I managed a leatherback sea turtle nesting population for almost 20 years. When I started the project we had approximately 20 turtles each year laying their eggs on Sandy Point, St. Croix, USVI. Almost all of the eggs were lost each season due to poaching or beach erosion. In 1982, we started patrolling the beach every night with volunteers. Poaching disappeared as a threat and by relocating nests to stable parts of the beach we reduced nest loss to less than 3% per year. Almost 30 years later we now have nesting seasons with over 200 turtles. That is an order of magnitude increase. All due to simple nest and egg protection efforts.

As sea turtles are slow growing, and face many threats both on the beach and in the ocean, the results of a nest and egg protection program can take decades to realize. Considering these species have been on the planet for over 100 million years, this is nothing. But without such efforts, we may likely see these species disappear in just a few human generations.

I urge all who can to support the efforts of the Tigre Salvaje project. It will cost you next to nothing and yet reap far reaching benefits for many future generations of sea turtles and humans.

Sincerely,

Rafe Boulon, Chief
Resource Management