



# Working together to save sea turtles



2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle

In the Pacific, the turtle is a key figure in many traditions and cultures: it symbolises longevity, stamina, tranquility and strength.

After millions of years navigating the Pacific Ocean, their existence is threatened, with an estimated 50-100 years before the turtle's journey ends forever. This demands an urgent call for a coordinated and committed effort to reduce the numbers of turtles dying.

## 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle

2006 has been declared the Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle, a regional campaign to encourage partnerships and collaboration to increase the numbers of sea turtles in the Pacific ocean.

### The Year of the Sea Turtle has three key aims:

1. Promote community conservation of turtle nesting sites
2. Strengthen national legislation and policies to encourage sustainable management
3. Facilitate long-term partnerships for turtle conservation



### Community management

For centuries, turtles have been an integral part of Pacific diet, culture and history. In some Pacific countries, turtle meat is a traditional food source, turtle bones are used to make tools, and shells are made for decorative and ceremonial purposes. However, numbers are rapidly decreasing as turtles are overharvested, and affected by other factors.

Many of the turtle feeding and nesting areas are on customary lands, owned by communities. SPREP will work with key partners to strengthen community based conservation initiatives within the following focus areas:

- ❖ Identifying and protecting turtle nesting and foraging grounds in the region
- ❖ Improving information bases to be used by communities and schools
- ❖ Strengthening community and industry involvement to reduce threats from over-harvesting, habitat destruction, marine debris & pollution

### National guidance and leadership

Legislators and policy makers play an important role in the strengthening of national activities that include:



- ❖ Reviewing the effectiveness and relevancy of existing legislation and policies concerning turtle conservation
- ❖ Supporting the development of national conservation protocols
- ❖ Developing a strategy to develop national turtle research and surveys
- ❖ Participating in a regional satellite tagging programme



Sea Turtles: protect them, protect our heritage



SPREP is a regional intergovernmental organisation working with Pacific island countries and territories to strengthen environmental management and promote sustainable development.



## Working together to strengthen Pacific turtle conservation

Given their migratory nature and status, turtle conservation requires a long-term regional

collaboration and partnership for the efforts to be effective.

As a shared resource, turtle conservation is a shared responsibility, and SPREP is promoting the need for communities, governments and industry to work together to strengthen turtle conservation.

This regional campaign is facilitated SPREP in collaboration with its key partners; intergovernmental organisations, national governments, local communities, the fishing industry, fisheries and tourism authorities, donors, NGOs, institutes and other organizations.

The campaign's success is dependent on the participation of partners and the integration of the campaign activities into programme plans.



## Turtle facts

Turtles have been around for millions of years; their ancestors shared the world with dinosaurs.

It is estimated that only one out of 1,000 turtle eggs actually produces a turtle that lives long enough to breed.

Turtles connect Pacific island countries. Turtles represent the Pacific islands unity, joined in spirit by the deep blue of the Pacific ocean.

Turtles can live up to 60-70 years!

Turtles can travel up to 3,000 kilometres across the sea.

Six of the seven species of sea turtles in the world are found in the Pacific.

Turtles are slow growing and take up to 20 and 30 years before they can breed.

Turtles are threatened. If we don't look after them, they will become extinct.



### For more information contact:

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## What you can do to help

### Stop excess harvesting

Many countries have laws that control the harvesting of turtles.

### Don't disturb turtle feeding or nesting grounds

Control lighting near nesting beaches. Do not disturb nesting grounds. Leave the turtles to nest and leave the eggs to hatch.

### Dispose of your rubbish properly!

Never throw old fishing lines, plastic bags or other pollutants into the ocean or dispose of near beaches.

### Do not buy products made from turtle shell

### Report tagged turtles

If you find a tagged turtle write down the tag details, species and location, and send the information to SPREP, **PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa**, or tell your local fisheries or conservation officer.

### Help conserve - spread the word!

Share what you know about turtle conservation with your friends, family and communities. Learn about the local conservation projects in your country and find out what you can do to help.

