

**Fourth
Meeting of the
Regional Marine Turtle
Conservation Programme**



Held on
4 -5 August 1994
in **Apia, Western Samoa**

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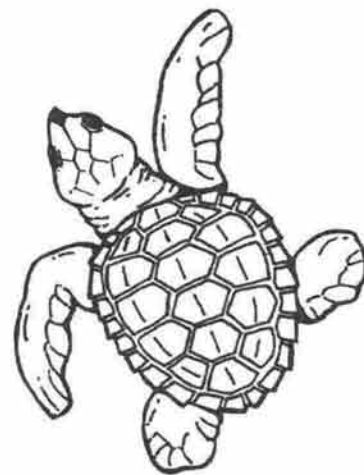
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Held on 4-5 August, 1994

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July 1995

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Obituary

Subsequent to this meeting, the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme was saddened to learn that Mr David Idip, the Chair for this Meeting and Director of Palau's Bureau of Natural Resources, and Development passed away soon after.

David is remembered for his unswerving commitment to conserving Palau's and the region's natural resources from over-exploitation.

His determination and dignity will be missed by all in the RMTCP and by all SPREP member countries.

Meeting Report

Item 1. Welcome

1. The *Fourth Meeting of the South Pacific Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Program* (RMTCP) was convened by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) on 4-5 August 1994 in Apia, Western Samoa.

2. Mr Don Stewart, Deputy Director of SPREP, welcomed participants to the meeting. In his opening statement, Mr Stewart reminded participants of the resolutions made at the Third RMTCP Meeting.

This meeting recommended that:

- i. *there be an immediate and substantial reduction in the numbers of turtles being killed throughout the region,*
- ii. *countries of the region be encouraged to ban international trade in turtles and turtle products;*
- iii. *countries of the region be encouraged to introduce a moratorium, or where possible a permanent cessation, on within-country commercial transactions of turtles and turtle products, allowing only cultural and or subsistence takes;*
- iv. *1995 be ceremonially considered the "Year of the Sea Turtle" in the Pacific Region, and that whenever and wherever possible and practical, on a voluntary basis, restraint be exercised in the killing of turtles for all purposes.*

3. Mr. Stewart reported that the South Pacific Forum considered these recommendations at their recent meeting and fully supported them.

4. The Fourth RMTCP Meeting's key objective was to plan for the *1995 Year of the Sea Turtle* in the South Pacific. In addition, the meeting was to briefly review progress towards the goals and objectives of the RMTOP and to serve as the key forum to exchange ideas and information pursuant to turtle conservation and management.

5. In wishing participants a successful meeting, Mr Stewart reminded the gathering of the urgency of successful conservation outcomes to ensure survival of sea turtle resources in the SPREP region. A high profile awareness campaign for the 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle was critical in delivering turtle conservation messages throughout the region and elsewhere.

Item 2. Opening

6. Mr Unase Mese, the representative for the Secretary for Lands, Survey and Environment, delivered the opening address. He congratulated SPREP for its work to date which had mostly focused on scientific research and monitoring exercises. In-country turtle conservation programs have benefited from the results of these activities.

7. Mr Mese emphasised that the turtle has considerable traditional value to the peoples of the Pacific. In Samoa the turtle is called *sa laumei* (sacred fish), and only the high chief was allowed to consume it. The shell of the turtle was used for fishing lures, bracelets and necklaces. Some villagers believed that the matai title originated from turtle lore. Turtles are of great importance to the Samoan culture.

8. With the establishment of the Western Samoan Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) efforts have begun to conserve turtles in Western Samoa. Cyclones have resulted in considerable damage to most of the nesting beaches. The DEC is trying to re-establish nesting sites and has mounted a public awareness campaign which has resulted in a voluntary ban on turtle consumption in many villages. At the national level, regulations to ban consumption or sale of turtles with a carapace of less than 700mm and to ban the killing of turtles at certain times of the year are in preparation.

9. In concluding his opening statement, Mr Mese declared his confidence in SPREP member nations working together to develop an effective strategy to conserve the turtle in the South Pacific and wished the participants a successful meeting.

Item 3. Election of Chairperson

10. The Meeting elected Mr David Idip of Palau as Chairperson.

Item 4. Meeting Objectives and Procedures

11. Ms Sue Miller, SPREP's new Biodiversity (Species) Officer, outlined arrangements for the meeting including the key outputs expected from this forum. The main purpose of the Fourth RMTCP Meeting was to begin the planning process for in-country and regional activities for the *1995 Year of the Sea Turtle*. In addition, the meeting was to briefly review progress towards the goals and objectives of the RMTCP, including Resolutions made at the Third RMTCP Meeting, and to serve as the key forum to exchange ideas and information pursuant to turtle conservation and management.

12. A number of documents were circulated for discussion and use of by RMTCP participants to facilitate these outputs, as shown in Annex 1. A participants list was circulated and completed, shown in Annex 2.

13. Ms Miller outlined her role as facilitator of the meeting objectives and noted the continuing trend of increased SPREP member country participation in the RMTCP. This trend not only indicated the acknowledgment of turtle conservation issues, but also the usefulness of combining in-country and regional approaches to a resource management issue that crossed national boundaries.

Item 5. Adoption of Agenda

14. The meeting adopted the Draft Agenda, shown in Annex 4, with slight modifications to change the order of Items 6 and 7.

Item 6. Overview and update on the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme

RMTCP Goal: To conserve marine turtles and their cultural, economic and nutritional values for the coastal people of the countries served by SPREP.

15. Ms Miller presented a summary report of RMTCP activities since the Third RMTCP meeting in June 1993 for discussion. Work is focused on implementing the strategic plan adopted in 1993 and the Resolutions of the 1993 RMTCP Meeting. Special acknowledgment of the excellent work of Adrienne Farago, Suzie Geermans and Lucille Apis was given.

16. It was noted that SPREP member participation in the RMTCP had steadily increased from 8 to 15 (American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, USA and Western Samoa) in the last two years, which has resulted in a considerable increase in workload and need for further project funds.

6.1 Turtle Database Consultant

17. Of particular concern was the loss of the Turtle Database Consultant and the current lack of funds to replace this position since November 1993. A funding proposal was submitted to the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA) but was unsuccessful, securing only \$20,000 of the \$56,000 pa required for the position to be based at SPREP. The extent of this position and where it should be based was discussed. There are three key functions of the turtle database consultant:

- i. development and maintenance of the database;
- ii. training of RMTCP member's staff in turtle monitoring work; and,
- iii. helping to initiate new programs.

18. ANCA stated that cost was the key reason that the proposal was not fully funded, however, ANCA was keen to further look at ways of supporting the RMTCP. Dr Limpus indicated that a new person would require extensive training based in Australia for approximately 6 months. Dr Limpus's Department was prepared to offer office space and computer facilities. It was commented that perhaps the job was not likely to need a full-time position and that the Biodiversity Officer (Species) should assume a part role in this regard. After some discussion on this point it was generally felt that the job, combined with the demands of the forthcoming campaign, was likely to be a full-time role. The meeting agreed that funding of this position is an urgent priority.

6.2 Education Activities

20. Posters and fact sheets were still available to RMTCP members, with some translated into local languages. Demand for these materials continued to grow. The turtle video was in the final stages of production and would be ready for distribution for the 1995 campaign.

6.3 Training

22. SPREP assistance to training of RMTCP staff was not available until replacement of the turtle database consultant.

6.4 Draft RMTCP Country Summaries of Turtle Resources, Traditional Uses, Legislation and Bibliography.

23. A draft document was given to the Fourth RMTCP meeting as a working resource. Any corrections or alterations would be forwarded to SPREP. It was intended that this document be a dynamic one that was updated regularly for use by the RMTCP. New sections such as tagging and census summaries were planned to be added in the near future. Copies of references listed in the Bibliography were available to RMTCP members.

6.5 Turtle Bycatch

24. Turtle bycatch was being addressed by some RMTCP members. Australia was trying to ensure that bycatch issues were addressed in the UN High Seas Fisheries process. Mr Balazs informed participants that the *Western Pacific Fishery Management Council* was also addressing the bycatch issue north west of Hawaii where up to 150 boats, some from the Atlantic, were fishing.

25. A meeting was held on this issue in November 1993 and again in May 1994. At that stage, the exact turtle bycatch statistics (i.e. number of turtles caught, released and kept) of Japan, Korea and Taiwan were not available.

6.6 RMTCP Budget

26. There were two major funding sources for the RMTCP - the *South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme* (SPBCP) and the Canadian Government. Funds for RMTCP work are summarised in Table 1. All figures are in US dollars unless otherwise stated.

27. Committed project expenditure for 1994 included turtle population and monitoring work in Yap, PNG, New Caledonia (all ICOD, total \$CAD30,000); Solomon Islands, Western Samoa, Fiji (SPBCP); further development of educational materials (\$CAD9,000).

28. New RMTCP projects were being developed for Kiribati and Tonga. Ongoing work in Arnavon Islands (Solomon Islands) was also supported during 1994. Palau and Yap indicated that they were likely to submit new proposals. Funding for turtle conservation work in RMTCP member nations who are French or United States Territories remains a problem.

Item 7. Turtle Biology and Research Update

29. Mr. Balazs and Dr. Limpus presented updates on turtle research and biology for meeting participants. In addition Mr Balazs presented a slide show - "America's Sea Turtles" - and indicated that a similar version could be produced for this region. Key points made in the discussion on turtle biology and research update were given under appropriate issue headings.

7.1 Artificial Hatcheries and Head Starting Programmes

30. It is important to distinguish between artificial hatcheries (which are incubation sites for threatened nests) and turtle mariculture (*head starting*) which attempts to raise hatching turtles to larger sizes before release.

Table 1: RMTCP Budget for 1994-97

Items	1994	1995	1996	1997
Secured Funds	119,600 ¹	89,200 ²	39,200 ³	0
Unsecured Funds	56,000 ⁴	56,000 ⁴	56,000 ⁴	100,000 ⁵

Sources:

1 SBPCP (79,600) , ICOD (40,000)

2 SPBCP

3 SPBCP

4 1993 Turtle Database Consultant proposal to ANCA secured \$20,000Aus which was not sufficient to use for this position and was subsequently lost with change in financial year.

5 Preliminary estimate of funds required to operate the RMTCP.

31. Artificial hatcheries, while posing some threat to the natural success of *in-situ* incubation of turtle nests are often the prescribed methods of protecting nests from salt water inundation and natural predators. While the obvious option is to conserve natural nesting sites, artificial hatcheries have proven successful in increasing hatchling production in cases where nests would otherwise have no chance of survival. However, head starting is widely considered an unproven, disruptive experimental conservation technique and should not be promoted.

7.2 Age to first breeding

32. It takes at least 20 and possibly up to 50 years for female turtles to produce their first clutch of eggs. This long time to reach reproductive maturity should be emphasised in awareness programs for turtle conservation.

7.3 Genetic studies

33. **Mitochondria DNA analysis** is a powerful genetic research tool which can identify where a turtle was born and the discreteness of breeding populations. Application of genetic research can identify the source of breeding stock of harvested turtles, and thus can be used to assist development of equitable resource allocation.

34. Genetic work has changed perceptions of turtle resource management, with research results indicating a general lack of interbreeding between populations for all practical purposes within the foreseeable future. This means that if a nesting population is wiped out that stock is effectively gone forever. At present research has been carried out on loggerhead, green and hawksbill turtles from Micronesia, PNG and New Caledonia.

35. The PNG and Micronesian rookeries have distinct genetic profiles from each other and all other regional rookeries sampled so far (Australia, Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia). This indicates that the PNG and Micronesian rookeries are separate breeding populations.

36. Results for loggerhead turtles show that the breeding populations in East Australia and southern Japan do not interbreed. Loggerhead harvest is concentrated in Melanesia and a 50-80% decline in breeding numbers has been observed in the past 10 years. Indonesia is the major harvester with an estimated 30,000 - 50,000 animals taken each year. Researchers plan to sample harvested turtles to identify where these animals were born.

37. Hawksbill genetic research has shown that nesting populations in Solomon Islands are not interbreeding with populations from the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

38. Those RMTCP members wishing to participate in the turtle genetic programme should contact Dr Col Limpus.

7.4 Satellite Telemetry

39. Tracking adult green turtle migrations from nesting to feeding grounds was undertaken using small radio transmitters attached to turtles, which send signals to earth-orbiting satellites. Turtles have been tagged and monitored from French Frigate Shoals to Ohau (1200km), and Rose Atoll (American Samoa) to Fiji. Work planned in 1995 included more tagging at Rose Atoll and at Kanton Island in Kiribati. This technique provided valuable information on oceanic movements, swimming behaviour and navigational abilities of sea turtles. As shown by Dr Peter Craig's work in American Samoa, this technique also provided a valuable opportunity for highly effective and novel conservation programs through "guessing where the turtles go" competitions.

Item 8. Country Reports

40. Participants provided accounts of marine turtle conservation activities in their countries since the *Third RMTCP Meeting*.

8.1 Federated States of Micronesia: Yap

41. The turtle tagging programme was carried out for most of the outer islands, including sample collections for genetic analysis sent to Australia. Tags have been recovered from Philippines and the Marshall Islands. It is planned to continue the Turtle Education Programs to Outer Island communities, the tagging and monitoring program concentrating on Lathow and Moseran Islands (Ngulu Atoll) and Pig Islands (Ulithi Atoll), and to continue to provide samples for genetic analysis.

8.2 Guam

42. Incidental observations of turtles were recorded during bi-monthly aerial surveys of fishing activity along the entire Guam shoreline. Aerial surveys were also used during the breeding season to identify turtle crawls at known nesting areas. Turtle management issues in Guam included illegal harvesting, habitat degradation and increased man-related activity along the shoreline.

43. Growth of Guam's population and tourism industry (approaching 1 million visitors p.a.), combined with continued development, threatened to bring even more man-related activity closer to previously inaccessible and undisturbed turtle habitats. Some tagging took place with 8 green and 12 hawksbills tagged up to 1991. To date one tag had been recovered.

8.3 Cook Islands

44. Green and hawksbill turtles are found in Cook Islands. Preliminary survey work carried out by Fisheries Officers revealed that turtles are concentrated in the Northern Group. Nesting sites were identified and there were some attempts at head starting turtles for food and release. Turtles are hunted both inside and outside lagoon areas, but away from nesting sites. Turtles have not been tagged in the Cook Islands since 1977. There are no regulations for the protection of marine turtles in the Cook Islands, however there are some traditional controls by fishers.

8.4 Solomon Islands

45. Ongoing work was concentrated on a major hawksbill rookery in the Arnavon Islands which is now part of a wider conservation initiative, jointly implemented by the government and The Nature Conservancy. The involvement of local landowning groups is central to this project.

46. The *Fisheries Act* was amended in 1993 to ban the sale and export of turtles and turtle products and the taking of nesting turtles or eggs during the breeding season. Turtle conservation education and information activities are ongoing, focusing on communities near important nesting areas.

8.5 Tokelau

47. Observations suggest that turtle resources in Tokelau are rapidly declining. Green, hawksbill and loggerheads (rare) are all found in Tokelau. Green turtles nest on all three atolls, whilst hawksbill and loggerheads nest only on Nukunonu. Traditional laws govern turtle use. On Nukunonu the *Council of Elders* banned the taking of turtles (including eggs) for five years. Councils were considering similar moves on the other two atolls. Egg taking was banned on Fakaofu, and turtles cannot be caught without the knowledge of the *Council of Elders*.

48. Two turtles were tagged and released since 1993, and no genetic samples taken. Turtle conservation issues are now part of the school curriculum in Tokelau. Focus is on education activities to increase public awareness of turtle conservation issues.

8.6 Papua New Guinea

49. Financial constraints limited the tagging programme in 1993/4 in Papua New Guinea. Nesting sites were visited whenever possible. Egg harvest was common. Awareness campaigns were a priority, but there are language barriers with over 700 languages, and areas where neither English nor Pidgin is well understood.

8.7 Australia

50. Dr Col Limpus reported on recent work under Item 7. Mr John Hicks reported on Australia's work with the *Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals* (CMS). All species of turtles in SPREP waters are listed on CMS's Appendices I and II. This Convention could be useful in Pacific turtle conservation work through the negotiation of an agreement. Parties identified turtles as a priority for conservation under the *Bonn Convention*. This could be enabled by a regional agreement between "range states". Australia was working with PNG and Indonesia on turtle programmes. ANCA's education programme of the *Australian Endangered Species Program* could assist with educational activities for the *1995 Year of the Sea Turtle*.

8.8 Western Samoa

51. A tagging programme, including purchase, tag and release of turtles for sale in the local market was underway. One tagged turtle was recovered three times. Nesting sites were surveyed in the Aleipata district. Radio programs and newspaper articles were used to increase public awareness. Investigation of traditional use of turtles was also underway. New fisheries regulations were drafted to ban both the sale of turtle eggs and turtles smaller than 700mm carapace length. The draft legislation also enabled the Director to ban any turtle catch for a period, through consultation with village councils.

8.9 American Samoa

52. Satellite transmitter work on turtles combined with a public contest to guess where turtles migrated, was a great success in American Samoa. The satellite tags showed that all three turtles went to Fiji. The competition was a great success in raising awareness of turtle's migration and thus the need to protect them as a shared resource. Turtle work focused on the last nesting area for green turtles in American Samoa - Rose Atoll, a wildlife refuge. Only about 30 turtles nested there annually. The habitat was fully protected but nesting appeared in decline, likely due to harvest elsewhere.

8.10 Palau

53. Recent field research in January - March 1994 focused on hawksbill nesting in the Seventy Islands group in the Rock Islands. During this period 15 nesting crawls were recorded on 10 nesting beaches in and immediately adjacent to the Seventy Islands Wildlife Preserve. It was estimated that about 50% of the nests were unsuccessful due to inundation, predation or human disturbance. A tagging and genetic sample collection programme was being planned. Education activities included production of a pamphlet, development of a slide show, radio announcements and interviews. Existing turtle regulations were being reviewed.

8.11 Kiribati

54. Kiribati became involved with the RMTCP in 1993 with both the Environment Unit and the Fisheries Department working together in turtle issues. Since this time a survey form was designed for Fisheries Assistants in the Gilbert and Line Islands for input into the Fisheries Department's database.

55. Education and awareness activities were a priority for the coming year and were being coordinated by the AusAID-funded Environmental Education Officer. Turtle legislation needs would be addressed later in 1994 as part of the *Environmental Law Review* (UNEP). A proposal was submitted to the RMTCP for funding, and Kiribati looked forward to participating in the *1995 Year of the Sea Turtle*.

8.12 Fiji

56. Work during 1993/4 concentrated on surveys, hatchery and education/awareness initiatives. Over 175 (50 tagged) hawksbills were released from Dalice Bay - Makogai Is hatchery. A recent survey of Lomai Viti Island

groups revealed a major decline in nesting. In the 1960/70s hawksbill turtles nesting in this area numbered in their hundreds. Nest counts were down to less than 2-3 per area. There was an urgent need for effective conservation management for this area. Fiji was responding by planning to extend the ban on taking of turtles from 4 to 8 months (September - March), and initiating a range of education and awareness activities.

8.13 Niue

57. Niue was participating in the RMTCP for the first time at this meeting. Turtles were common in the waters of Niue but do not nest there. There was some tourism interest in turtles which swim close in shore. Turtles were not taken for food in Niue.

8.14 Tonga

58. Some turtle survey, tagging and monitoring work was carried out in Tonga in the Vava'u and Ha'apai groups. Nesting sites were known from 18 islands in the Vava'u (5) and Ha'apai (13) islands groups. Most of these islands were uninhabited.

59. New legislation for turtle resource management was drafted by the Fisheries Department. Provisions included: banning the take of turtle eggs and interference with nests, banning the use of spear guns to take turtles, banning taking turtles of less than 15cm shell length, specifying closed seasons on the take of adult turtles; and a total ban on taking leatherback turtles. Law enforcement for the turtle regulations was especially difficult in outlying islands. Tonga was preparing a project for funding from SPBCP. Priorities were for education/awareness activities, confirmation of nesting sites, tagging and surveying.

8.15 Hawaii (USA)

60. Hawaii's ongoing turtle conservation programme has a number of high priority areas: satellite telemetry, bycatch of turtles in long line fisheries, turtle tumour disease, DNA genetic analysis and turtle eco-tourism. The programme was coordinated by Mr George Balazs, Leader of the Marine Turtle Research Program of the Honolulu Laboratory, National Marine Fisheries Service.

61. Satellite telemetry work was reported on in Item 7.4. Research was initiated to understand the scope, magnitude and fate of sea turtles accidentally hooked or entangled in longline fishing. A workshop was to be convened early in 1995 to address the prevention and mitigation of

longline hooking of turtles. Representatives from SPREP's turtle program would be invited to attend the meeting as long line fisheries occurred in most waters of SPREP countries.

62. Tumour disease (**fibropapillomatosis**) is a debilitating and often fatal disease of Hawaiian green turtles, and was a focus of research. The infectious agent, likely a virus, had not been identified. With complete protection of green turtle populations for 17 years they were now showing some encouraging signs of recovery following decades of unregulated commercial and other forms of over-exploitation.

63. Green turtles in Hawaii were now playing an increasing role in eco-tourism, with visitors snorkelling with turtles and customised dive tour operations. Watching turtles from the shore was popular. This sustainable use of turtles was occurring with clear economic and educational benefits.

8.16 Vanuatu

64. Vanuatu was unable to send a representative to the RMTCP meeting but provided a report on recent activities. Marine turtle survey and monitoring was ongoing. In 1994 the island of Epi (Central Vanuatu) was surveyed for turtles. Despite reports that many turtles nest there in September - October only one turtle, a loggerhead, was found. Epi Island reported a leatherback rookery which was confirmed in this survey. The Environment Unit would conduct follow up survey work in this area during 1994.

Item 9. Turtle Video production

65. A "rough-cut" version of the video was shown at the Meeting by *Tradewind Communications* producer, Hans Andersen, for the Meeting's information and final approval. After some discussion on various shots and dialogue the Meeting agreed for Dr Limpus, Mr Andersen and Ms Miller to go through the final script before the end of the meeting. The final version would be dubbed, duplicated and sent to SPREP before November 1994.

Item 10. 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle - Campaign Plan

66. The Meeting discussed campaign goals, key messages and audiences and many regional and in-country initiatives that could be undertaken as part of the *1995 Year of the Sea Turtle*.

67. Discussions focused on developing short- and long-term activities to raise awareness of sea turtles and related issues in the Pacific islands' marine environment. These discussions resulted in the *Campaign Resource Document* attached as Annex 4.

Item 11. Meeting Resolutions

68. The Meeting recommended that:

- i. *SPREP establish a working party from SPREP members, and invite participation from other appropriate organisations, including South Pacific Commission and Forum Fisheries Agency, to investigate suitable mechanisms to implement Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the 1993 RMTCP Meeting.*
- ii. *Noted with appreciation the support of 25th South Pacific Forum for the 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle and that this working party ensure action on these 1993 resolutions be taken in sufficient time for a report to be available for the 26th South Pacific Forum.*
- iii. *SPREP members be encouraged to accede to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).*
- iv. *SPREP members continue to support the campaign activities of the Year of the Sea Turtle*

Item 12. Commendations

69. The following individuals were commended:

- i. *To Peter Craig (American Samoa) for his successful and highly innovative work in the Great Samoan Turtle Mystery programme.*
- ii. *To Suzie Geermans, former RMTCP Turtle Database Consultant, for her work in establishing the RMTCP database.*

70. The Meeting thanked the Chairman and acknowledged the funding support of the *South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme*, the *Canadian Government*, *Australian Nature Conservation Authority* and the *CITES Secretariat* for their support of SPREP's Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme.

Annexes

Annex 1: Documents for the Meeting

1. Draft Agenda
2. List of Participants

SPREP

3. RMTCP Programme Report
4. RMTCP Summaries of Country Resources, Traditional Use, Legislation and Bibliography (Working Draft July 1994).
5. *Report of the Third Meeting of the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme and the First Meeting of the Regional Marine Mammals Conservation Programme. 9-11 June 1993, Apia, Western Samoa.* SPREP.

QDEH/ANCA

6. *Proceedings of the Australian Marine Turtle Conservation Workshop, Sea World, Nara Resort, Gold Coast, 14-17 November 1990.* Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage and Australian Nature Conservation Agency.

Annex 2: Participants List

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Annex 3: Meeting Agenda

Thursday 4 August

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 8:45 - 9:15am | 1. Welcome |
| | 2. Opening by The Honourable Minister for Lands Survey and Environment, Faasootauloa T. Pati |
| 9:45 - 12:00am | 3. Election of a Chairperson |
| | 4. Meeting Objectives and Procedures |
| | 5. Adoption of Agenda |
| | 6. Turtle Biology and Research Update |
| | 7. Overview and update on RMTCP activities (including database, meeting resolutions and strategic plan) |
| | 8. Brief review of turtle activities by country |
| 1:15 - 3:00pm | 9. Above session continued. |
| 3:15 - 5:00pm | 10. <i>1995 Year of the Sea Turtle:</i> |
| | a. Planning discussions: |
| | b. Goals and Objectives |
| | c. Communications |
| | d. Management Issues |
| | e. Education |
| | f. Legislation and Policy |
| | g. Research |
| | h. Fund-raising and budget |

Friday 5 August

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 08:30 - 10:00am | Item 10 continued. |
| 10:30 - 11:30am | Item 10 continued. |
| 11:30 - 12:30pm | Turtle video update and presentation. |
| 1:45 - 3:00pm | Item 10 continued and summarised into an <i>Action Plan for 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle.</i> |
| 3:15 - 5:00pm | Other business. |
| | Completion and adoption of meeting report. |
| | Close of meeting. |

Annex 4: Campaign Plan for 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle



REGIONAL MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

1995 YEAR OF THE SEA TURTLE

CAMPAIGN PLAN



CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Key Messages and Audiences
- 3 SPREP's planned activities
 - Communication initiatives
 - Policy initiatives
 - Resource production
- 4 SPREP's Timeline
- 5 In-country activities
- 6 Things to keep in mind
- 7 Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation
- 8 Summary
- 9 Campaign Resource Form

Attachments

1. SPREP Turtle Fact Sheet
2. Video Translation Kit
3. Tips on talking to the media.
4. How to write a press release.
5. RMTCP network contact list.
6. Current examples of turtle computer artwork available from SPREP.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1993 the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme (RMTCP) resolved that 1995 be designated the 'Year of the Sea Turtle' in the Pacific. This initiative arose from increasing concern at decline in sea turtle populations in the region and has subsequently been supported by the SPREP Intergovernmental Meeting, South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Forum. In August 1994 RMTCP members met to plan for the 1995 'Year of the Sea Turtle' in Apia, Western Samoa. This document outlines SPREP's planned activities and forms a campaign planning kit for RMTCP members. This campaign is largely an awareness exercise and policy implementation initiative, and is part of a larger RMTCP programme that includes ongoing policy, survey, monitoring and research work. The RMTCP is one of SPREP's Regional Species Programs and is currently funded by the Global Environment Facility, CITES and the Canadian Government.

The RMTCP's overall goal is to conserve marine turtles and their cultural, economic and nutritional values for coastal people of the countries served by SPREP.

1995 Year of the Sea Turtle - Campaign Goals

To communicate the urgent need to conserve the Pacific's sea turtles.

SPREP's role: *is to help coordinate and facilitate the 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle by accessing necessary resources and support to in-country activities and by undertaking a number of regional initiatives in support of this campaign.*

Key SPREP Contacts

<i>Sue Miller</i>	<i>RMTCP Coordinator</i>
<i>Wes Ward</i>	<i>Information Officer</i>
<i>Gisa Salesa-Uesele</i>	<i>Education Officer</i>
<i>Joe Reti</i>	<i>SPBCP manager</i>
<i>Ruta Tupua</i>	<i>Divisional Assistant</i>

RMTCP members role: *currently 15 countries are active members of the RMTCP (Amerika Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, USA, Western Samoa). SPREP is encouraging RMTCP members to produce campaign plans for the Year of the Sea Turtle which will be complemented by SPREP's regional campaign activities and resource production. SPREP is available to assist the development of national campaign activities and to provide some funding towards these.*

2. KEY MESSAGES AND AUDIENCES

CAMPAIGN SLOGAN

LET OUR TURTLE FAMILY LIVE!

'Let our turtle family live' is the agreed campaign slogan for the 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle. This will be used regionally by SPREP and also in RMTCP members national campaigns. However, RMTCP members may wish to develop local slogans for use in their countries activities. Local language translations of the Campaign Slogan and Key Messages are requested from each participating country - please see Response Form (Item 4).

In drafting material for education and awareness work the following Key Messages should be used.

- SEA TURTLES ARE UNDER THREAT!
 - TOO MANY TURTLES ARE BEING KILLED.
 - TURTLES BREED VERY SLOWLY. IT TAKES MORE THAN 20 YEARS FOR TURTLE MOTHERS TO HAVE BABIES.
 - YOUR ISLAND'S TURTLES ARE UNIQUE, ONCE THEY ARE GONE
 - OTHER TURTLES WILL NOT COME TO YOUR ISLAND'S NESTING BEACHES.
 - SAVE TURTLES FOR OUR CHILDREN - KILL FEWER, OR NONE AT ALL.
- and for targeted audiences
- DON'T BUY /SELL TURTLE SOUVENIRS.
 - REPORT TAGGED TURTLES.

Note that in the fourth key message there has been a suggested change of wording to avoid ambiguity. Original wording was "Your island's turtles are unique, once they are killed they don't come back".

Key Audiences

In planning campaign activities careful consideration of how to reach Key Audiences (adults, children, women's groups, youth groups and religious groups, fishermen, village chiefs, villages, church leaders, politicians, government officials, administrators and legislators, teachers, schools and education system, tourists, tourism industry, airlines, store owners, media, consumers and sellers, NGOs) should be made.



3. SPREP's PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Communication initiatives

Resource production

Policy initiatives

COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES: KEY SCHEDULED EVENTS

i) Campaign Launch 6 March 1995

Regional launch scheduled for 1 March 1995. It is proposed that as the Year of the Turtle was endorsed by the Forum, Heads of Government should announce the campaign in as many countries as possible. This can be coordinated by Prime Minister's Departments, SPREP Focal Points based on information from national RMTCP members and SPREP.

ACTION: HEADS OF GOVERNMENT TO ANNOUNCE CAMPAIGN

SPREP will also put out a regional media release on 1/3/95 to announce the campaign. This media release will focus on the threat to turtle resources, highlight the importance and key goals and messages of the campaign and launch the campaign artwork. The campaign poster and sticker is based on artwork received during the Regional Children's Turtle Art Competition and is thus newsworthy in its own right and provides useful anchor for the launch.

The media pack for the campaign launch will contain; media release, any Heads of Government press statements on the Year of the Sea Turtle, 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle fact sheet, A4 copy of turtle poster, RMTCP contact list for the Year of the Sea Turtle for media.

Media packs will be sent out at least 1 week prior to the campaign launch, by courier and mail to media, RMTCP network, Heads of Government and Conservation Department Offices and SPREP Focal Points.

ACTION: SPREP REGIONAL PRESS RELEASE & CAMPAIGN MEDIA PACK

In addition SPREP will send out, by fax, on 2 March a PROCLAMATION to all regional organizations and NGOs and key organizations within and outside the SPREP region that will announce the Year of the Sea Turtle. This will call on these agencies to support this campaign.

RMTCP members please note that this regional launch of the campaign does not prevent national launches either before or after this launch. However, it is seen as highly desirable that national Heads of Government participate in the regional launch as the Forum endorsed this campaign. All RMTCP members will be copied any correspondence sent to their National SPREP Focal Points of Heads of Government.

ii) Turtle Video and TV Community Advertisement 5 April 1995

Regional Launch of the turtle video is scheduled for 5 April. SPREP will put out a media release announcing the importance and availability of this video and summarize the known TV airings throughout 1995. The launch of the video will hopefully reach TV news stations that can take excerpts for a news story on 3 April. SPREP will liaise directly with TV stations and RMTCP members in order to obtain the best airing coverage of the video and TV Community advertisement.. The latter is produced in order to obtain wider coverage of the campaign and is to be aired free of charge by TV stations as part of their community services.

Through response to this campaign plan RMTCP members can order the number of video copies that they need for the campaign. These will sent out as soon as orders are received.

ACTION: MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT OF VIDEO AND REGION'S TV STATIONS TO ANNOUNCE AND SHOW VIDEO & TV AD.

iii) Turtle Rap song and music video 3 May 1995

In association with Tradewinds and Shane Rivers (musician) SPREP is producing a turtle rap song and music video. This will be launched on 3 May with a regional press release focused on radio and TV stations in the region. SPREP will send directly to TV and radios the music video and tape and copies will be sent to all RMTCP members well before release of the song. Launch will take place in either Western Samoa or New Zealand as the composer/preformer is a Samoan New Zealander. It is hoped that the song will prove popular and aired on radio and TV throughout the region - even nightclubs maybe! RMTCP members may wish to run a national turtle rap competition to support this initiative.

ACTION: LAUNCH OF TURTLE RAP SONG AND VIDEO

iv) Focus on Turtle Tourism Products June - August 1995

It is proposed that during these three months that a real focus on promoting turtle souvenirs not made from turtles and a push against the use of turtles for souvenir production be made. To this end a regional children's art competition (open to all SPREP member nations) will be run along the theme of 'Don't Sell Or Buy Our Turtles'. A SPREP media release announcing the competition with particular media focus in Australia, NZ and USA to highlight that it is illegal to bring in turtle products will be made. Results from the competition will be used for a poster to highlight these issues for production in late 1995 or early 1996. Work is also planned with tourism agencies, airports and airlines during this time to highlight this issue in in-flight videos, airline magazines, travel information and airports.

ACTION: 'Don't Sell Or Buy Our Turtles' REGIONAL ART COMPETITION AND ASSOCIATED PROMOTIONS

v) Turtle Satellite Transmitter Regional Competition October 1995

(timing to be confirmed)

SPREP is supporting work that will tag turtles in Kiribati with satellite transmitters. Based on the successful experience in American Samoa a region wide competition will be run to guess where the turtles go. This will be run in conjunction with George Balazs's work and the competition will be open to all SPREP member nations. A media release and press work will be undertaken by SPREP to support this work.

ACTION: 'TURTLE TRAVEL' COMPETITION & ASSOCIATED MEDIA WORK

vi) Turtle Tourism November 1995

Media and press work dealing with the potential for turtle tourism will be carried out in conjunction with the start to the main turtle breeding season. Work in this area will be based on a proposed consultancy which will look at existing turtle tourism operations and the potential for these initiatives in the region.

ACTION: TURTLE TOURISM REPORT & ASSOCIATED MEDIA WORK

vii) Campaign Wrap-up December 1995

Media work highlighting the work and success of the campaign both regionally and nationally will be released in the first week of December. It will also contain an outlook for the future of turtles and outline work urgently needed in the region. It will also (hopefully) announce a Sea Turtle Week or Day designated throughout the region from 1996 onwards. In this way an annual awareness focus at the national and regional level can occur each year.

ACTION: MEDIA CAMPAIGN WRAP-UP & DESIGNATION OF SEA TURTLE DAY/WEEK

viii) SPREP Communication Vehicles throughout 1995

SPREP has a number of vehicles or mechanisms suitable for getting the turtle conservation message across. These are briefly outlined below:

• **SPREP's *Environment Newsletter***

The first 1995 issue of the *Environment Newsletter* will feature the *Year of the Sea Turtle* as will a wrap up feature on the campaign in the last newsletter issue for 1995. Smaller update or more focused issue-based articles will be included as opportunity permits.

• **SPREP's *CASOLink* newsletter**

The *CASOLink* newsletter is a new SPREP publication communicating news and events associated with projects in supported by the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme. The first 1995 issue profiles the Year of the Sea Turtle. Updates and a wrap up feature at the end of the year will also be made. Turtle work in SPBCP Conservation Areas and issues and opportunities related to turtles e.g. tourism will be reported on in this newsletter.

• **SPREP letterhead, faxes and circulars**

It is planned that the campaign sticker artwork be scanned in computer format for use on *SPREP letterheads, faxes, circulars* etc to be used by SPREP staff. Feasibility of engraving a stamp with this artwork will also be looked at for use on envelopes. The computer scanned artwork and stamp (if feasible and funding allows) will be available to RMTCP members.

• **Display at SPREP Office**

Thanks to entries from the regional children's art competition SPREP now has an amazing resource of turtle pictures. During the year SPREP receives many visitors to its offices, a display of the poster and selected artwork in the reception area will be set up in time for the campaign launch. Displays are also planned in bank offices in Apia in conjunction with the Western Samoan Department of Environment and Conservation.

ix) SPREP Education and Community Development Programme

SPREP's Education Officer Gisa Salesa-Usele and Community Development Officer Henry Merto plan a series of Teachers and Community Workshops throughout 1995. A module on turtle conservation will be included in each workshop. Tentative scheduling of workshops are; February (Solomon Islands), March/April (Vanuatu, Western Samoa), April (Fiji), June (Cook Islands), August (Marshall Islands), October (Tuvalu), November (FSM), December (Palau). Please contact these SPREP Officers for more details.

x) Quarterly TV Turtle News Service

In association with Tradewinds SPREP plans to provide a quarterly turtle campaign news service for TV stations in the region. All TV stations will be invited to participate by sending tapes with their turtle news stories which will be compiled and sent out by Tradewinds for use by TV stations throughout the region. In this way news in Samoa can reach Fiji or Vanuatu TV for example. At the moment there is very little of this between country TV news exchange. The material provided could be used for feature stores and general human interest stories on the campaign rather than being "hard news".

UNSCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

The activities below will be undertaken as time and opportunity allows throughout the year and are targeted at specific kinds of media and/or audiences.

Airlines

Feature articles in airline magazines and in flight video programs will be promoted and worked on during the year. Key Airlines to target are Polynesian, Royal Tongan, Air Pacific, Air New Zealand, Qantas, Air Nugini, Solomon Airlines, Vanuatu Air and services, including American Airlines, to FSM, Guam and elsewhere in the region.

Newspaper and Magazine Community Advertisement

Based on the poster and sticker artwork a newspaper/magazine advertisement will be prepared for camera-ready copy distribution with a request for free of charge placement.

Newspaper and Magazine Feature Articles

Feature articles for newspaper and magazines will be prepared (with photos available) on the campaign and specific issues such as new results of research etc. Assistance from the turtle experts (Limpus and Balazs) will be sought in the preparation of these features.

Turtle Research Scholarship

SPREP will investigate the potential for part funding or obtaining sponsorship funds for a graduate research scholarship at the University of the South Pacific to study turtles.

NGO and IGO publications

Many NGOs have regular newsletter publications, SPREP will endeavour to get turtle issue coverage in as many of these newsletters as possible. SPREP will also provide material to supporting inter-government agencies e.g. UNDP, UNEP, GEF to profile the Year of the Sea Turtle in their publications.

One World - Radio Australia

At least four turtle feature articles are planned to air on the One World radio programme which is broadcast throughout the Pacific. One will profile the campaign launch and the key issues, a wrap up article at the close of the campaign will also be featured. At least two other issue specific articles are planned e.g. on the satellite transmitter work.

Tagata pasifika - TVNZ

This programme which deals with Pacific issues is broadcast widely in the region and has already featured turtle conservation stores. Tangata pasifika will be encouraged to participate in the campaign by using video, rap song and featuring other news stories. It is hoped that a special feature programme can profile turtle work and the campaign during 1995.

International Turtle Documentary

SPREP has begun discussions with NZ documentary makers on the production of a documentary on turtles for audiences in the Pacific but especially in Australia, NZ, America and Europe. It is hoped to secure funding and begin production before the end of the campaign.

Children's Colouring Book

SPREP is currently looking at production of a children's turtle coloring book based on the work of the Fagatele Marine Sanctuary's (Amerika Samoa) revision of the Center of Marine Conservation Turtle Coloring Book. Funding is being sought for this project.

Children's turtle video

Through George Balazs SPREP has access to a video on turtles aimed at children. It is planned, if suitable, to copy this to broadcast tapes containing the music video and TV community advertisement announcement.

Designation of Pacific Sea Turtle Day or Week

SPREP will investigate with the South Forum, SPREP member nations and other appropriate agencies the possibility of a permanent designation of a week or day each year to highlight turtle conservation issues. Ideally the timing of this annual event should coincide with turtle nesting as this is when turtles may feature highest in peoples minds and may also provide more photo media opportunities with the 'beginning of new life' theme.

Turtle Stamps

SPREP will contact all countries in the region inviting them to produce or re-issue stamps featuring the Pacific's sea turtles in commemoration of the Year of the Sea Turtle. The turtle campaign artwork will also be available for countries to use as stamp artwork free of charge.

T-shirts

Depending on final budgets a limited number of T-shirts featuring the campaign artwork is planned to be produced. These will be distributed to the RMTCP network and members will be encouraged to wear them when dealing with media or talking to groups on the Year of the Sea Turtle. A limited number will also be available for presentation to individuals who significantly help the campaign.

Museums, Zoos, Visitor Information Bureaus, Environment Centers, Aquarium Displays

A information and resource package on the campaign will be sent to the above agencies and institutions that cater to the public. Posters, stickers, Fact Sheets and the Turtle Video will be the main material available. RMTCP members are requested to provide contact details of these institutions to SPREP if they do not plan to send these materials directly to them as part of national campaigns.

Turtle Tagging Programme

This is ongoing work as part of the wider RMTCP, however, information on the campaign will be added to the package of material sent to those who report tagged turtles.

In-country support

SPREP is available to assist in-country campaign activities, depending on staff availability and cost. The SPREP RMTCP coordinator will endeavor to profile the campaign, particularly to media, during all duty travel associated with this and other programme areas.

The policy initiative during the 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle will be work to implement Resolution 2 and 3 from the 1993 RMTCP meeting. That is to focus on.

The Resolutions are:

1993 RMTCP Res.2. *Countries of the region be encouraged to ban international trade in turtles and turtle products.*

1993 RMTCP Res.3. *Countries of the region be encouraged to introduce a moratorium, or where possible a permanent cessation, on within-country commercial transactions of turtles and turtle products, allowing only cultural and /or subsistence takes.*

SPREP's work on this issue will be focused on in-country support and through establishment of a working party as per Resolution 1 of the 1994 RMTCP meeting:

1994 RMTCP Res.1. *SPREP establish a working party from SPREP members, and invite participation from other appropriate organizations, including South Pacific Commission and Forum Fisheries Agency, to investigate suitable mechanisms to implement Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the 1993 RMTCP Meeting.*

The working party will report to the RMTCP, SPREP IGM, SPC and the Forum in 1995 and 1996.

In this way it is hoped that substantial progress on implementing 1993 RMTCP Resolution 1 for 'an immediate and substantial reduction in the numbers of turtles being killed throughout the region' can be made.

Other issues that will be worked on as time permits are: country accession to CITES, turtle bycatch in fisheries and turtle tourism.

SPREP will produce the following campaign materials for in-country use and regional use. See the for ordering these materials.

1995 Year of the Sea Turtle resources:

- Let Our Turtle Family Live:
Poster, Sticker, Fact Sheet, T shirt (to be confirmed), Turtle Rap Music / TV Community Advertisement / Children's Turtle Video Compilation Video, Newspaper / Magazine Advertisement.

Other resources available:

- Where have all the Turtles Gone Poster
- Report Tagged Turtles Poster
- Turtle Fact Sheets
- Turtle Computer Art - available on disc for use in Microsoft Word on IBM based computers.



4. SPREP's 1995 TIMELINE

January	* Finalization of Campaign Plan and Distribution
February	* Final printing/production of main campaign resources * Campaign Media pack distributed * SPREP Teacher & Community Workshop - Solomon Islands
March	* 1 March Campaign Launch * 2 March - Turtle Conservation Proclamation * SPREP Teacher & Community Workshop - Vanuatu, W. Samoa
April	* 5 April Turtle Video Launch * SPREP Teacher & Community Workshop - Fiji
May	* 3 May - Turtle Rap Song/Video Launch
June	* 'Don't Buy or Sell Our Turtles' initiative begins * SPREP Teacher & Community Workshop - Cook Islands
July	
August	* SPREP Teacher & Community Workshop - Marshall Islands
September	
October	* Turtle Satellite Transmitter Competition begins * SPREP Teacher & Community Workshop - Tuvalu
November	* Opportunities for Turtle Tourism * SPREP Teacher & Community Workshop - FSM
December	* Campaign Wrap Up * SPREP Teacher & Community Workshop -Palau

Please note only scheduled activities have been included in the above timeline. See full list of activities under SPREP's Communication Initiatives.



5. IN-COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

During the fourth RMTCP meeting in Apia in August 1994 a number of possible activities and initiatives for in-country campaign work to support the Year of the Sea Turtle. These have been listed below to assist countries in planning their work for 1995. SPREP is happy to offer further assistance to the development of national campaign activities where required. Note that the list below is additional to activities and resources provided e.g. videos, posters and stickers etc that have been outlined above.

media work

radio, TV, newspaper, magazines interviews

children's competitions

speech, song (rap), poetry, story, national slogans, poster

village and/or market theatre

local meetings, presentations and talks with key audiences including

chiefs, village elders, women, church groups, schools, fishermen etc..

designation of a national turtle day or week

billboards

displays in offices, schools, markets, churches, banks, shops

national workshops focused on revival of traditional cultural knowledge to conserve turtles

In order to further assist countries there are a number of Attachments to this document including "Tips on Talking to the Media" and "How to Write a Press Release".



6. THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

The campaign is primarily a communications exercise and with limited resources it is important to keep activities focused, simple and aimed at targeting the desired audience.

Local languages should be used as much as possible. Local culture e.g. legends and traditional practices resulting in less turtle resource use should be promoted.

In each in-country activity key working partners within and outside government need to be identified. NGOs have a key role to play in the campaign.

Ongoing research and monitoring activities should be incorporated into the awareness campaign. For example, media releases on tagging, surveys, satellite transmitter work. Local people should be involved in any work in their area and the results of the work should be communicated back to them.

7. REPORTING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

SPREP will keep a log of feedback and response to all initiatives undertaken in the campaign. RMTCP members are requested to provide regular updates to SPREP to enable the SPREP reporting serve to operate efficiently.

RMTCP members will receive end of month reports on campaign activities and a profile of the coming months activities. This is to accommodate and enable RMTCP member response to changes in event scheduling and the addition to any new initiatives and opportunities that may arise.

A final campaign report will be produced for RMTCP members by March 1994. This will cover both regional and national campaign activities. RMTCP members are requested to provide campaign reports by end of January 1996.

It is proposed that the fifth RMTCP meeting take place March/April 1996 to evaluate the campaign* and progress within the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme and to plan, in context of the agreed strategy 1996/7 RMTCP work.

8. SUMMARY

The **1995 Year of the Sea Turtle** is a region wide conservation awareness campaign aimed at communicating the urgent need to conserve the Pacific's turtle resources. A number of scheduled key events and other activities have been outlined above to support the **1995 Year of the Sea Turtle**. SPREP welcomes new ideas for support both for regional and in-country activities.

SPREP has produced a number of resources, including videos, fact sheets, posters and stickers, which are available for in-country and regional use and can be ordered by filling out the SPREP is available to assist the development of in-country campaign activities and has some funds to support these. proposals for specific activities should be forwarded to SPREP as soon as possible.

SPREP looks forward to working with RMTCP members, turtle scientists, NGOs and other interested parties in the **1995 Year of the Sea Turtle**.

