



SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE THE PATH OF CONSERVATION IS ABOUT CONTINUOUSLY GIVING SOMETHING UP CUTTING OUT, SACRIFICING, THE THOUGHT OF FORGOING A FAVORITE FOOD IS NOT SOMETHING WE ENJOY THINKING ABOUT THE MORE EARTH-MINDED WE BECOME. THE MORE WE REALIZE THE IMPACT OUR CHOICES AS A CONSUMER HAVE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, IT'S FUNNY HOW IT WORKS—WHEN WE MAKE A COMMITMENT TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THE NATURAL WORLD, THE AREAS WHERE WE DON'T HONOR THAT COMMITMENT BECOME INCREASINGLY OBVIOUS. THAT'S WHY I'M GIVING UP MY FAVORITE SEAFOOD—SHRIMP!

I t all started (and ended) with a trip to the local market. The package read "a farm-raised product of Vietnam." I told myself since these shrimp were farm-raised they must be ocean-friendly and it would be fine if I indulged myself. But I knew better. So I gave myself one condition: I'd spend the evening researching the shrimp fishing industry. I went home that night and cooked a tasty shrimp curry dish while I surfed the web and emailed some marine biologist friends. What I found when I entered the keywords "shrimp farming" made it impossible for me to finish my meal.

Most people know how devastating shrimp trawling is on marine life due to by-catch, the animals caught in the net that are not shrimp. The statistics are astonishing. It seems that while shrimp trawlers provide only 2 percent of the world's seafood, they haul in a third of the global fishing industry's by-catch. The so-called by-catch I speak of includes sea turtles, sharks, rays, juvenile fish, crabs, sponges and starfish. But the destruction doesn't stop at sea; it has made its way from ocean to earth, making the damage more widespread than ever before.

Mangroves are being destroyed, farmlands have been rendered infertile, animals and people are falling ill from the pollution, and thousands of citizens are being forced out of their homelands, and even murdered in some cases—all in the name of shrimp farming. The stories are heartbreaking and I'm barely scratching the surface. The costs of fishing, farming, selling, buying and eating shrimp are dangerously high and the end result could leave us ecologically bankrupt.

After continuing my research and discussing the topic with friends and colleagues for a few days, I couldn't bare to look at the bag of shrimp in my refrigerator anymore. Images of lifeless baby sharks, impoverished people (Vietnamese in the case of my bag of shrimp) and slashed mangrove forests polluted my head. I grabbed

the bag and made my way back to the market.

"I'd like to return these," I informed the guy at the customer service desk. He looked at the opened bag and said, "Is there something wrong with them?" "Yes there is something very wrong with them. People, animals, the ocean and the earth are dying for our favorite shrimp dish," I admonished him. "Then why did you open them?" he asked, "because they are my favorite seafood, and I thought I could eat them. But I researched shrimp farming on the web and I just can't do it anymore." He said this was the most original reason for a return that he'd ever heard and kindly refunded my money. I shared my story with a friend whose response was sobering: "I wish it wasn't so original," he said.

He's right, giving something up for the sake of our planet shouldn't be such a unusual act. For me, giving up shrimp wasn't an overnight decision. I've been sharing the issue for some time now and in my resignation have entertained more outlandish justifications than I could bat an eyelash at. But after really diving in and researching what's out there, I simply cannot close my eyes any longer. In my research, I've learned that our own Gulf of California is home to one of the world's largest shrimp fishing and farming operations.

Look to future issues of *Baja Life* for more coverage on the high ecological and social costs of industrial shrimp fishing in the Sea of Cortez...and think of everything you give life to by giving up a little thing...like shrimp.

Note: not all shrimp fishing and farming activities are equally destructive, and some fishermen have taken measures to make their techniques safer for animals like sea turtles. A few shrimp farms are even ocean and coast-friendly. So do some research about these "eco-shrimp" sellers, and if you must eat shrimp, give them your business.

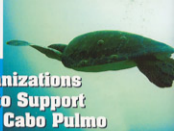
—Jenna Cavell, *Environmental Affairs*

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[www.bajalife.com/ecowatch](http://www.bajalife.com/ecowatch)

VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CONSERVATION EFFORTS RELATED TO SHRIMP TRAWLING:

[www.zocon.org/baja/question.asp?col=seafood&ch.asp](http://www.zocon.org/baja/question.asp?col=seafood&ch.asp)  
[www.ocean.org](http://www.ocean.org) • [www.seaturtle.org](http://www.seaturtle.org)



# Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) Work to Support Conservation in Cabo Pulmo

## Pro Peninsula

Conceived from a master's thesis by two visionary students, at UCSD's Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, Pro Peninsula began offering support to organizations throughout the peninsula in September 2001. Since then, Pro Peninsula has matured into one of the leading conservation organizations working on the Baja

California peninsula, having implemented and engaged in a range of projects throughout the region. Pro Peninsula, established as a

501c3 organization, is led by a dedicated board with expertise in science, conservation and advocacy, employs staff members in both the U.S. and Mexico experienced in international environmental policy, non-profit management, science, and grassroots conservation and is supported by an active and dedicated membership.

Pro Peninsula is dedicated to empowering communities and organizations on the Baja California peninsula to protect and preserve their environment. Pro Peninsula envisions the creation of a network of strong and effective environmental organizations backed by an educated and active public working towards the common goal of environmental preservation. [www.propeninsula.org](http://www.propeninsula.org)



## Grupo Tortuguero

Five species of sea turtles inhabit the Eastern Pacific; all are endangered (IUCN Red List, 2000) and four are ecologically extinct. Sea turtle mortality is occurring with direct take by poachers who sell turtle meat and eggs on the black market and by incidental capture in fishing nets, trawls, and on loglines. While publications on sea turtle ecology, health and genetics are expanding, few on-the-ground projects are addressing the main threats to turtle survival. The Grupo Tortuguero was formed in 1999 to fill this void and recover Eastern Pacific sea turtle populations.

The Grupo Tortuguero is a network of individuals, communities, organizations, and institutions from around the world dedicated to sea turtle conservation. We envision sea turtles fulfilling their ecological roles on a healthy planet where all people value and celebrate their continued survival. We empower people and their communities to conserve sea turtles, inspiring a revolution in our relationship with the ocean. We accomplish this by building a diverse conservation network to expand knowledge, develop innovative solutions and share them widely. [www.grupotortuguero.org](http://www.grupotortuguero.org)

## Amigos para la Conservación de Cabo Pulmo, A.C.

Amigos para la Conservación de Cabo Pulmo, A.C. (Friends for the Conservation of Cabo Pulmo - ACCP) is a community organization founded in 2002 by fishermen, dive guides, residents and housewives in the local community to promote conservation of the natural resources of the park. ACCP's mission is to conserve the biodiversity and unique marine habitat in and around Cabo Pulmo National Park (PNCP), including the Cabo Pulmo coral reef system.

ACCP is dedicated to developing vital educational and monitoring programs that are made possible by the enthusiastic support of the local community. The residents of Cabo Pulmo have demonstrated a great desire and strong commitment to the group's activities including the sea turtle monitoring and coral reef monitoring programs. [www.pulmoamigos.org](http://www.pulmoamigos.org)



## UN Calls for Closures to Protect Sea Turtles

WHILE A GOOD FIRST STEP, SCIENTISTS SAY A MORATORIUM IS DEFINITELY NEEDED

Forest Knolls, California — On November 26, the United Nations General Assembly voted on a resolution that calls for closures of fishing in areas where large numbers of critically endangered sea turtles are caught or killed. The critically endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtle is on the verge of extinction and is expected by scientists to go extinct in the next 5-30 years unless immediate measures to eliminate threats posed by industrial longline fishing are taken. Environmentalists are pleased at this first step but warn that a moratorium on destructive longline fishing is needed in the Pacific if the leatherback is to survive.

"We are pleased that the UN is finally moving closer to the worldwide consensus that something urgently needs to be done to prevent the extinction of the leatherback and loggerhead sea turtles in the Pacific," said Robert Overz, Save the Leatherback Campaign Coordinator of the US based Sea Turtle Restoration Project which is leading the advocacy effort by a coalition of international environmental organizations.

Last June, a parade of schoolchildren dressed in sea turtle costumes delivered a

petition to the UN signed by thousands of citizens, 1,007 scientists from 97 countries and 281 non-governmental organizations from 64 countries urging it to implement a moratorium on high seas industrial longline fishing in the Pacific. The list of signers includes famed primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall, Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson, oceanographer Dr. Sylvia Earle, a National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence and former U.S. astronaut Bernard Harris, Jr. M.D.

According to the recent reports in the scientific journal *Nature*, the 100 million year old leatherback sea turtle is on the brink of extinction. The population of female nesting leatherbacks has declined by about 95% since 1980.

Dr. James Spotila, a co-author of one of the reports, signed the petition to the UN and testified before the UN this past June. "The descent of the leatherback toward extinction is a global ecological tragedy that affects us all. As goes the leatherback, so goes the ocean," warned Dr. Spotila. Dr. Spotila is the President of the International Sea Turtle Society, President of The



Leatherback Turtles, and Betz Chair of Environmental Science at Drexel University.

The language endorsing a set of guidelines recently drafted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization originated at the June meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. On the first day of the meeting, the meeting directed all nations that have signed the convention and regional fisheries management organizations to urgently implement the closures and other measures outlined in recent UN FAO guidelines for reducing interactions with sea turtles. Similar language calling for time and area closures to reduce the bycatch (the unwanted capture and killing of ocean wildlife) of industrial fishing also appears in the same section of the resolution. These two recommendations are included in the resolution that will be voted on by the UN General Assembly.

"While proposing time and area closures is a good first step, the UN has a long way to go to heed the call of the scientific community to implement a moratorium on longline fishing in the Pacific. A moratorium would give us the time to put proven conservation measures into place to keep the leatherback from dropping off into oblivion forever," Overz added. ■

-Editor

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### Resources:

- For a copy of the UN draft fisheries resolution: [www.seaturtles.org/pdf\\_leathback01\\_10\\_05.pdf](http://www.seaturtles.org/pdf_leathback01_10_05.pdf)
- For a copy of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project's new book *Stripping the Pacific on the Impact of Longline Fishing on the Pacific Leatherback* go to: [www.seaturtles.org/jnews\\_release.cfm?newsID=259](http://www.seaturtles.org/jnews_release.cfm?newsID=259)
- For a copy of the scientist and NGO letters to the UN calling for a moratorium on longline fishing in the Pacific go to: [www.seaturtles.org/jnews\\_release.cfm?newsID=267](http://www.seaturtles.org/jnews_release.cfm?newsID=267)
- For a review copy of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project's new documentary film *Last Journey for the Leatherback?* Contact Robert Overz, PhD at 415 488 0270 x 106.

The Sea Turtle Restoration Project is a California-based international marine conservation organization that works to protect sea turtles and other marine species in the United States and in countries around the world. For more information about sea turtles and the Sea Turtle Restoration Project, please visit: [www.seaturtles.org](http://www.seaturtles.org) or [www.saveleatherback.com](http://www.saveleatherback.com)

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## Mandating Responsible Fishing of Sharks and Rays

On November 29, 2005 the Mexican Official Standard for the responsible fishing of sharks and rays, the NORMA 029, was published in the "Diario Oficial de la Federación" (Mexico's Federal Register).

**I**EMANIA OCEANICA A.C. WOULD like to congratulate the Mexican authorities for the issuance of the revised Mexican Standard, the NORMA-029. We consider the publication of this document a great step toward the regulation and sustainable use of sharks and rays in Mexico and are in support of the publication of the regulation upon the confirmation of the document over the next two months. We realize that there is a great need for more information and knowledge on these species which could in turn improve the global management of sharks and rays. In response to the issuance of the NORMA, Iemania's scientific advisor, Dr. Peter Klimley, stated "The enactment of NORMA 029, given public review, will be a momentous step forward toward the conservation of sharks in Mexican waters. Ideally, it will lead to the growth of shark

populations, and permit a modest level of fishing yet result in sustained population levels from year to year."

IEMANIA OCEANICA A.C. has been carrying out the program "Piscadores y Tiburones - A shark conservation network of artisanal fishing communities" in Baja California Sur. The objective of this program is to instill an ethic of responsible and sustainable fishing among artisanal fishers of sharks and rays. This goal is achieved through environmental education, establishment of alternative economic activities and the involvement of fishers in shark and ray research. These activities generate more information that IEMANIA hopes will serve future revisions of shark management as well as helping artisanal fishing communities who depend on this resource for their livelihood, to comply with and survive regulations such as closures. ■



### The Shark NORMA-029

Below is a summary of some of the most salient components:

1. Shark fishing is prohibited.
2. The capture of the following species is prohibited: whale shark (*Phinodon typus*), basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*), great white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), small tooth sawfish (*Pristis perotteti*, *P. pectinata* y *P. microdon*) and mantas (*Manta birostris*, *Mobula japonica*, *M. thurstoni*, *M. munkiana*, *M. hypocoeloma* y *M. tarapacana*).
3. Total fishing effort may not be increased.
4. Dismantlefishes may not be fished in:
  - A radius of 5 km around the sea lion colonies of the island of the Gulf of California and the west coast of the Baja Cal-

ifornia Peninsula and the coral reefs of all of Mexico.

- In front of the outlets of rivers and coastal lagoons
  - Less than 5 km of beaches where sea turtles nest.
1. Use of gillnets and longlines is prohibited in the lagoon systems of the west coast of the Baja California Peninsula between December 1st and April 30th. It is also prohibited in Banderos Bay located on the coasts of the States of Nayarit and Jalisco and within a radius of 5km around the Baja Gorda and Espiritu Santo in Baja California Sur throughout the year.
  2. Use of gillnets is prohibited in shark and ray shelter areas.



## 8th Annual Meeting of the Grupo Tortuguero Loreto, January 27-29, 2006

**T**he 8th Annual Meeting of the Grupo Tortuguero will be held from January 27-29, 2006 in Loreto, Baja California Sur, Mexico. This meeting has grown from a small gathering of 45 Baja residents who wanted to save sea turtles in 1999 to the region's premier grassroots conservation meeting. The meeting will highlight members of our monitoring stations from across the Baja California peninsula, the Gulf of California and internationally, who will present community reports and update us on the recovery status of sea turtles at historically high turtle mortality locations.

There will be informational sessions and workshops available to all participants, as well as a number of separate workshops and activities for "Young Conservationists" at the 2nd Youth Meeting for the Conservation of Baja California's Sea Turtles. Attendees will include scientists, environmental educators, students, community members, children and youth, and others who want to bring turtles back to those waters by preventing their unnecessary killing for consumption or as a "by-catch" in commercial fishing operations. ■



- Fishers are obligated to conduct a statistical control of the catch per species through the use of logbooks and identification guides.
- Fishers must also participate in the "Observers on Board Program" under the charge of the Secretary (SAGARPA).
- Artisanal vessels (less than 10.5 m in length) may use one drift longline with up to 350 hooks, one bottom longline up to 560 hooks and one bottom gillnet with a maximum length of 750m and a minimum mesh size of 6 inches.
- Mid range vessels (10 to 27m in length) in the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea and Gulf of California may use a longline with up to 1000 hooks. On the west coast of the Baja California Peninsula the longline may have up to 1200 hooks.
- Long range vessels (more than 27m in length) may use one long line with

up to 1200 hooks in the west coast of the Baja California Peninsula and up to 1500 in the rest of the Mexican Pacific. These vessels are prohibited from capturing of sharks and rays in the Gulf of California.

- SAGARPA (Secretary of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Rural Development, Fisheries and Nutrition) will create regional committees and sub-committees to administrate the shark and ray fisheries and which will be a part of the "Consejo Estatal de Pesca Y Acuicultura" (individual state advisory for fisheries and aquaculture).

The NOM 029 has now been issued for public consultation. Within 60 calendar days of its publication in the registry, the interested parties may present their comments the standard to be evaluated by a designated committee. Upon termination of this period, the final version of the NORMA 029 will be published.

