

The Project for a Marine Mammal Sanctuary in the French West Indies in 2007

(submitted by France)

At the plenary session of the International Whaling Commission in St Kitts & Nevis in June 2006, France presented its **project for a marine mammal sanctuary in the French West Indies**. As our representatives pointed out, the project is **purely national at this stage**, since its geographical scope falls within France's exclusive economic zone.

However, with a view to extending the sanctuary to any neighbouring countries interested in the initiative, **it seems useful to provide the countries in the region** and those that have overseas possessions there with **regular information** on the status of the French project. Furthermore, France can see only advantages in other concerned countries conducting similar initiatives in their own national waters. In addition to the immediate value for protecting marine mammals in these areas, such initiatives would encourage a harmonisation and convergence among the relevant actions. In this respect, the adoption of Decision X (appended) by the Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region is the first international recognition of the French initiative.

After a meeting of a policy working group on 2 June 2006 at the Guadeloupe Préfecture, the **steering committee** (membership list appended) **met for the first time on 14 February 2007 in Martinique**. The purpose of the meeting was to **define the organisation structure, work schedule and priority themes for the sanctuary project** in this initial phase.

I. Organisation structure and working method

The DIRENs¹ of Martinique and Guadeloupe, jointly in charge of the project, are steering **working groups devoted to the priority themes** (see Part II), with the extensive participation of other interested parties. The approach is based on **consultation among the various players in the maritime community**, following the model of the Pelagos sanctuary in the Mediterranean, which demonstrated the importance of this point. The chair of each working group will report back to the members of the steering committee on the progress of its work (either at steering committee plenary sessions or by e-mail).

In addition, **interministerial consultation** via the local representatives of the French government is essential for the project to be established, particularly with a view to defining a legal instrument that will ultimately be approved by all the ministries concerned (environment, fisheries, maritime transport, defence, industry and tourism).

The SPAW-RAC² (Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas And Wildlife) may also support the working groups and act as facilitator with its networks of Caribbean institutional partners and scientists, in liaison with the UNEP Regional Coordinating Unit of the Cartagena Convention in Jamaica. The sanctuary project is part of the SPAW protocol and the Marine Mammal Action Plan currently being designed.

II. Priority themes for working groups

In this initial phase, working groups have been set up on the following themes:

1. Current state of scientific knowledge

A **report on the current state of knowledge** is being prepared by the voluntary organisations *Evasion Tropicale* for Guadeloupe and SEPANMAR for Martinique. The two organisations, under the guidance of the DIRENs in Martinique and Guadeloupe, have years of experience in the scientific monitoring of cetaceans in the French

¹ Regional environment directorates, reporting to the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development.

² The SPAW-RAC supports the Secretariat and Parties to the SPAW Protocol of the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region to which France is a Party. It is based in Guadeloupe under the auspices of the French government.

West Indies with European and French government funding. They and the DIRENs agree on the value of **defining a common protocol** specific to the sanctuary for collecting data of use for scientific inventories.

➤ Chair: DIREN Martinique

2. Legal basis of sanctuary

A study to determine **the most appropriate legal instrument** to regulate the sanctuary within national waters is due to be commissioned shortly.

➤ Chair: DIREN Guadeloupe

3. Communication about the creation of the sanctuary and cetacean matters

The steering committee meeting of 14 February 2007 stressed the importance of aiming communication at

- **the professional maritime community**, particularly fisherfolk, who should be fully associated with the initiative. It was also pointed out that the new sanctuary would not significantly alter existing fisheries regulations;
- **young people**, and **public opinion** in general in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Madeleine de Grandmaison (Martinique regional council) proposed holding exhibitions about the sea like the “*Planète Mer*” exhibition recently held at the Senate in Paris.

➤ Chair: DIREN Martinique

As *Evasion Tropicale* pointed out, **recreational whale-watching** needs to be carefully regulated so as not to harm the various species. A code of conduct for whale-watching was signed in Guadeloupe in 2002. Other organisations (including the Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness) are preparing a brochure on the subject for the Anchorage meeting of the International Whaling Commission in May 2007.

The next meeting of the steering committee will be held before the end of 2007, when the work of these working groups will be presented.

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Twelfth Intergovernmental Meeting on the Action
Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme and
Ninth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the
Convention for the Protection and Development of
the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean
Region

Montego Bay, Jamaica, 29 November to 2 December 2006

DECISION X

Acknowledging the "French Government Project for a Marine Mammal Sanctuary in the French West Indies" (UNEP (DEPI)/CAR IG.26/CRP.2) presented by the Government of France,

Decides to:

1. **Take note** of the initiative of the Government of France on the creation of a national sanctuary in the Departments of Martinique, Guadeloupe, in St. Martin and St. Bartholomew for the protection of marine mammals in their EEZ.
2. **Invite** other governments to consider taking appropriate actions at the national level that meet the objectives of the Cartagena Convention and its SPAW Protocol.

**Steering Committee for the creation of a
marine mammal sanctuary in the French West Indies**

Martinique

Préfecture

DIREN: *Direction régionale de l'Environnement* (regional environment directorate)

DRAM: *Direction régionale des Affaires maritimes* (regional maritime affairs directorate)

COMAR: French Navy Command

Conseil Régional (regional council – Chair)

Conseil Général (département council – Chair)

Parc Naturel Régional (regional nature park – Chair)

Comité Régional des Pêches et des Elevages Marins de la Martinique (regional fisheries and fish farming committee – Chair)

Comité Martiniquais du Tourisme (Martinique tourism committee – Chair)

ECCEA voluntary organisation (Chair)

SEPANMAR voluntary organisation (Chair)

Guadeloupe

Préfecture

DIREN: *Direction régionale de l'Environnement* (regional environment directorate)

DRAM: *Direction régionale des Affaires maritimes* (regional maritime affairs directorate)

Parc National de Guadeloupe (Guadeloupe national park – Chair)

Conseil Régional (regional council – Chair)

Conseil Général (département council – Chair)

Comité Régional des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins de Guadeloupe (regional fisheries and fish farming committee – Chair)

Comité du Tourisme des îles de Guadeloupe (Guadeloupe islands tourism committee – Chair)

Evasion Tropicale voluntary organisation (Chair)

Other members

Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage (Délégation Régionale) (national hunting and wildlife office [regional delegation])

Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

French Embassy in Saint Lucia

Ministry of Overseas Territories

French Agency for Marine Protected Areas (AAMP)

SPAW-RAC: Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas And Wildlife