

SISTER CITY UPDATE

Issue 11

October 1999

Boat Aids Turtle Protection Efforts

The Chacocente sea turtle protection boat, the "Hermandad Wisconsin", is now in use. Bought in Nicaragua in July with money from generous Wisconsin donors, the boat has proved very useful.

Returning from his trip to Santa Teresa, Dr. Rob Horwich reported that the guards and soldiers stationed at Chacocente had just made an arrest while using the new boat. A large shrimp trawler was stopped, which turned out to have half a ton of sea turtle meat aboard. MARENA (Nicaraguan's DNR) will be prosecuting the shrimpers and fining them 75,000 cordobas (\$6250).

Mayor Martinez writes that the community is "happy about the boat since it has done much to

control the slaughter of the turtles, and the fishermen nowadays are very wary of going into the refuge. "I want to thank you in the name of all the Santa Teresans and me, myself, for your great effort that serves us for the protection of our natural resources."

The Sister City Project sent an additional \$400 of donated funds with Dr. Horwich. After consultation with Mayor Martinez, it was decided to put the money towards the demarcation of the Chacocente Refuge waters with buoys. The Wildlife Preservation Trust added \$200 to our money to complete the funding for this project. The buoys will reach four miles out into the ocean from the Chacocente shore.



The Chacocente sea turtle protection boat "Hermandad Wisconsin" (Wisconsin Sister/brotherhood). Pictured are Randall Arauz (on the left), Central American director of the Earth Island Institute Sea Turtle Restoration Project, and Santa Teresa mayor José Martínez.

BURRITO SUPPER & DANCE ON NOVEMBER 5

The Sister City Project will be holding a benefit supper and old-time dance on Friday evening November 5th. Come out and enjoy yourselves while raising money for people and sea turtles in Santa Teresa.

The 6:00 Burrito Supper will feature tortillas and all the fixings, Central American style rice, and delicious homemade desserts. Starting at 8:00, the Kettle Creek String Band will play and call old time dance music--including squares, reels, polkas, and waltzes. Dances are taught and all ages are welcome. \$7.00 per adult or \$4.00 per child includes both dinner and dance. \$4.50 is the adult price for one event. Family prices are available.

Come eat and dance on the beautiful hardwood floor at Blue Highways (old Masonic Temple), 165 N. Central, Richland Center. If you can help with supper or contribute a dessert, call Mary Bard at 647-2594 or Jane Furchgott at 583-2431.

Horwich Reports Progress on the Sea Turtle Front

Our sea turtle project is beginning to grow. We have achieved some major successes in the past year.

On our first fact-finding trip in September 1998, we brought along Dr. Rob Horwich of Community Conservation Inc. (CCI) to work with us. We continued to spread the message about Chacocente and its problems to the 1998 International Sea Turtle Symposium. Our efforts helped the Santa Teresans keep Nicaraguan President Aleman from building a highway through the Chacocente Wildlife Refuge. Finally, we raised money to buy the motorboat now in use protecting the Chacocente sea turtles.

This past August Dr. Horwich returned to Nicaragua. His trip focused on reassessing the sea turtle situation and bringing in other partners who are interested in the Chacocente project. Accompanying him was Dr. Fred Koontz of the Wildlife Preservation Trust who had worked with him in Belize.

In Managua they met with Santa Teresa Mayor Jose Martinez and Dr. Juan Carlos Martinez of the Nicaraguan environmental organization Fundacion Colcibolca. In 1998 these two men had met and had very different philosophical viewpoints, since Jose is community oriented and Juan Carlos scientifically oriented. But talking together this past year, they realized that although they have different approaches, their goals are the same - protection of the environment, specifically the Chacocente reserve and its turtles.

Rob Horwich envisions a two-pronged plan to bring together these two different points of view to benefit Chacocente.

First, the scientific path - to work with and strengthen Nicaraguan conservationists: The Fundacion Colcibolca would hire and supervise a young Nicaraguan scientist to look at the interaction between people and the Chacocente sea turtles, studying the egg distribution and collecting data.

The Wildlife Preservation Trust also wants to work with existing Nicaraguan biologists. This approach helps strengthen the country's environmental commitment by strengthening its scientific professionals, who will go on to do further work benefiting Nicaragua's environment.

Second, our side of the partnership - to strengthen the local communities: This can have a beneficial effect on the environment similar to the scientific approach. Building on Dr. Horwich's successful projects in Belize, we plan to involve the Santa Teresa community in protecting its environment and its sea turtles. Through our efforts, with help from Dr. Fred Koontz, we hope to provide some economic incentive for the villagers near Chacocente to take part in the protection of their resources.

Dr. Horwich, Mayor Martinez, and the other scientists agreed that the Santa Teresa Municipality needs to form its own local NGO (non-governmental organization), since COMAREN, their local environmental groups, is actually a commission and has no effective enforcement power. We will help the Santa Teresans form a local NGO that will begin to develop resource management plans, and will eventually serve to co-manage the Chacocente Refuge with the Nicaraguan government.

We hope to receive a grant to hire a U.S. graduate student who has experience in community development, along with a Santa Teresa person chosen by Mayor Martinez, to help the community form this NGO. These two people will also be collecting information for a resource management plan for Chacocente. The data provided by these people and the young Nicaraguan scientist will come together to give us information, about the use and abuse of Chacocente's resources and the process of forming the local NGO.

The Fundacion Colcibolca founded, and currently operates, a beautiful park at the Mombacho Volcano cloud forest. In the long term we hope that working with the Fundacion will lead to interest in the

formation of a real Nicaraguan National Park system,

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with Chacocente as the next potential National Park. Mayor Martinez and Colcibolca's Dr. Martinez agreed that the non-scientific aspects of Chacocente preservation would be managed by the Santa Teresans themselves, through the incipient NGO.

Our project to protect the Santa Teresan environment is progressing faster than we might have hoped. Earlier, Chacocente's land title problems had been seen as a major hurdle to clear before proceeding. Now, however, Dr. Koontz and Dr. Juan Carlos Martinez are encouraging their organizations to proceed with other aspects of the project, since Mayor Martinez and our Sister City Project are already so actively involved at Chacocente.

Article by Jane Furchgott, in consultation with Dr. Rob Horwich. Rob has recently suffered some serious health problems, including a broken leg. We extend our best wishes for a complete recovery, as well as our thanks for his work on behalf of Santa Teresa. He has continued his efforts despite his illness and injury.

Aid To Victims Of Heavy Rains

In a telephone conversation last week, Mayor Martinez told us that the rural communities near Chacocente were being devastated by heavy rains. Crops, animals, trees and houses were being washed away. Some people had drowned, and the roads to the area were washed out and impassable.

Mayor Martinez said the most pressing needs were for medicines and food. The Sister City Project wired him \$450 to be used to help the villagers affected by these rains.

The "Hermandad Wisconsin" boat has been doubly useful during these rains as the only way to reach the communities near Chacocente, land access being temporarily cut off. For this reason, the boat is kept

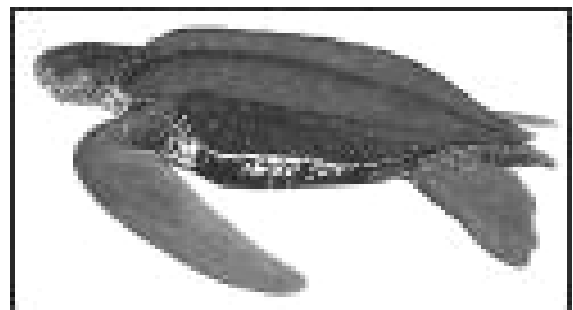
at Salinas in Rivas municipality, a village connected to the city of Santa Teresa by good roads.

Chacocente's Leatherbacks

In addition to the Olive Ridley turtles, which were observed by members of our 1998 delegation to Santa Teresa, the Chacocente beach is also a nesting area for the giant leatherback turtles. Leatherbacks are the world's largest sea turtles, an adult being over five feet long and weighing 800 pounds. Unlike other hard-shelled sea turtles, the leatherback's shell is composed of a thick layer of oily cartilaginous material strengthened by tiny bones. Strangely enough, the giant turtles feed on jellyfish.

Randall Arauz of Earth Island Institute's Sea Turtle Restoration Project accompanied Dr. Horwich to Chacocente. Local estimates were that during the nesting season, 3 or 4 leatherbacks a night lay their eggs at Chacocente. Arauz feels that this is an important nesting site for this very endangered sea turtle.

Arauz plans to start a small hatchery program for leatherback eggs at Chacocente. A sea turtle expert, he will train local people to protect and hatch the eggs, so that none are consumed by predators or humans.



Thanks to all those who contributed to the production of this issue including Jane Furchgott, Rob Horwich, Randall Arauz, Charles Munch, Mary Wunnicke, Aaron Wunnicke, and Stein Goering.

\$2,000 Challenge Grant

A generous Richland area person who wishes to remain anonymous has just offered the Sister City Project the gift of a \$2,000 matching grant. The Sister City Project must separately raise at least \$1,000 and up to \$2,000, which will then be doubled by the donor's gift.

The criteria for this grant require that the group come up with a specific project "environmentally and socially oriented, having the enthusiastic support of the Santa Teresa district". Further, the Sister City Project, with the help of the donor, should give ongoing support to this long term project.

We will be discussing the possibilities for this exciting offer at our next Sister City meeting. Meanwhile, we will gladly accept donations to begin meeting our share of the challenge. Contributions may be made in person at the Richland County Bank by making a deposit in the Santa Teresa Fund account, or given to Tom Bachman at the Brewer Library. Donations can also be mailed to the Sister City Project in care of the Brewer Library, 325 North Central, Richland Center, WI 53581. Checks should be made out to the Santa Teresa Fund.

We would also welcome anyone who wishes to attend our meetings or otherwise become more actively involved with the project. For more information, or to get on the list to be notified about meetings, please call Jane Furchgott at 608-583-2431 or Stein Goering at 608-538-3820, or email Stein at sgoering@uwc.edu.



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