

**FISHERIES DISASTER RELIEF PROGRAM (FDRP)
ANNUAL REPORT FOR FY 2007**

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FDRP Project Title and Project No.: 657783 Test of sea turtle responses to light sticks, shark shapes

Funding Agency: NOAA

1. Purpose of the Project (one paragraph)

Recent research has focused on strategies and gear modifications that reduce sea turtle interactions with longline fisheries. We are examining sea turtle behaviors that may lead to techniques useful for reducing sea turtle bycatch. In particular we have focused on the effects of lightsticks and shark shapes on turtle capture rates in gill nets modified to catch turtles. Understanding the visual cues responsible for attracting turtles, innate avoidance behaviors exhibited by sea turtles, and the behaviors turtles exhibit as they interact with fishing gear will be useful in developing new strategies aimed at reducing the accidental capture of sea turtles. In addition, we have engaged US and Mexican high students in these research projects in order to connect under-served youth to science, inspire environmental action, and increase their exposure to marine habitats.

2. Progress during FY 2007 (One-two paragraphs, including a comparison of the actual accomplishments to the objectives established for the period, and the reasons for slippage if established objectives were not met):

Planning for projects has been ongoing. During January through May we initiated multiple trips to Mexico to meet with partner scientists, local fishermen, and Mexican officials. During this period, necessary research permits were procured and agreements for cooperation were obtained. We conducted our first set of experiments during the neap tide of May in Punta Abreojos examining the effects of lightsticks and shark shapes on turtle capture rates using turtle monitoring nets. At this point, progress of the project has exceeded the objective timeline.

3. Plans for project completion:

During June, July, August, September experiments will be ongoing.

4. List of papers published in refereed journals during FY 2007.

N/A

5. Other papers, technical reports, meeting presentations, etc.

Results from this project was presented at:

A) 2007 International Sea Turtle Symposium
Charleston, SC

B) Preliminary data has been included in a NOAA Admin report and will be included in a NOAA Tech Memo.