

our knowledge and complement our capacities for reaching our conservation goals, and have some unique opportunities to interact with the local community. On February 5th through 8th we will have the themed oral and poster sessions, an outstanding group of returning and new Exhibitors and Vendors, traditional Symposium activities, and a few new things as well!

Sea turtles have been an integral part of ecosystems for over 60 million years, and have been linked with humans throughout recorded history. In 2013 we hope to explore, discuss, and expand upon these connections. Stay tuned

for the Symposium Registration and Reservations website to go live next month, AND, with the meeting coming in early February next year, start preparing for an October 1st, 2012 deadline for poster and presentation abstracts!

Let's CONNECT in Baltimore in February!!!

Ray Carthy, President
International Sea Turtle Society
33rd Annual Symposium - "CONNECTIONS"
Inner Harbor, Baltimore, MD, USA
Feb. 2-8, 2013. ■

REQUEST FOR DUGONG GENETIC SAMPLES

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Concern about the plight of the dugong in many parts of its range has led to the development of a Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Dugongs and their Habitat, which is administered by the UNEP/ Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) office in Abu Dhabi. The UNEP/CMS Dugong MOU Secretariat (the Secretariat) has recognised the value of a study on dugong genetics across the range states. Such a study will provide information on the recent evolutionary history of the species (where they lived in the past and where they live now), on the extent of gene flow mediated by movement of individuals between dugong populations and localities, and on the genetic diversity remaining in different dugong populations. The Secretariat is supporting the development of a network of scientists in range states who can obtain samples suitable for this work (usually small pieces of skin) and who are willing to contribute information to a range-wide study. Researchers at James Cook University in Townsville, Australia, have

already established a set of methods that are being used to obtain genetic information from Australian dugongs. Samples from other range states can be sent to Australia for analysis. However, it is important to build capacity in other countries and this is being encouraged by the Secretariat.

During the course of other work, it is possible turtle researchers might come across dugongs (dead and stranded, drowned in nets etc.) If so, a small skin sample taken from such animals can provide a lot of genetic information. We normally collect a piece of skin (the coloured part of the skin, not the underlying white dermis or fat) about 10 x 10 mm and 1-2 mm thick. In the field, preservation in ethanol (70-90%) is appropriate. Remember to have a ratio of about 1 volume of tissue to at least 10 volumes of preserving fluid. For further information and advice, or to report sightings of dugongs (hopefully alive), in rarely-visited places, please contact david.blair@jcu.edu.au. ■
