

between ourselves, the SSC Chair, IUCN HQ, and our Vice-Chair in the region. A scoping mission was planned and scheduled for late 2006 to investigate the situation. Both Rod and I suggested to the Chair of the SSC that the regional Vice-Chair be a part of that group, but a request was made that a completely external and unbiased review group be assembled for the mission, and this was clearly explained to the regional Vice Chair at the time.

It eventually transpired that I went on the initial scoping mission in late 2006, and subsequent missions to help the Port, all of which I have reported on in the past (see past MTSG Quarterly reports in the Marine Turtle Newsletter). When I first went to Dhamra, we walked into a Port under development, and were asked to help where we could – and there was plenty of scope for that. The science side of things suggests turtles can indeed coexist with a Port, and evidence both in India (the port at Paradeep is a great example, lying similarly close to a key mass nesting site and not having had any impact on nesting at Devi) and elsewhere (Florida and Australia, for instance, each hosting globally important nesting populations of turtles) does not support claims of an impending catastrophe. Dredging impacts can be and are currently being mitigated. Deflectors on the dredger dragheads, and screens on inflow and outflows, along with a permanent observer programme put together by the MTSG ensures this. Lighting impacts can be controlled, and MTSG input has already provided the solutions for a turtle-friendly light management plan. Ship collisions can be avoided by reductions in speed, at-sea contamination can be minimised by adherence to a sturdy environmental management plan, which IUCN intends to help develop. The truth is, ports and turtles co-exist all over the world, and it is

illogical to suggest, particularly with no evidence to support the claims, that the Dhamra port will be any different.

The MTSG does not direct the relationship between the Tata group and IUCN or run this entire project. The MTSG provides the scientific and technical input on saving turtles. MTSG members who have travelled to India as part of the project (myself, Dena Dickerson, Eric Hawk, Erik Martin and Blair Witherington) have all provided specific input to mitigating impacts of the port with regards to lighting and dredging. All of these inputs far exceed anything that was prescribed by the original EIA and operating permits which were specific to the port

But a sour taste remains from the MTSG involvement, and it saddens me that things are so. As I have stated publicly before, I never set out to alienate anyone, or to hurt anybody's feelings. Indeed, I hoped to establish some wonderful working relationships with colleagues in India, and am disappointed this has not yet transpired. I have worked hard over my professional career to positively impact turtle conservation in many countries, worked closely and developed wonderful friendships with people of varied backgrounds and cultures. I would like to think I am not insensitive to other people's feelings and opinions. But I also know that as a leader sometimes it falls to one person (or two, as in this case) to make a difficult decision, and in the case of Dhamra, a decision was to bring the powers of the group to bear on a complex issue in a way that could have a practical conservation output. For me, there was a tangible reason for engaging the scientific and technical expertise of the MTSG. We save turtles, it's what we do all over the world, and what we continue to do in Dhamra.

The Dhamra Port issue: some views from the Chair of the IUCN SSC

Holly T. Dublin

*SSC Chair's Office, Cape Town, South Africa.
Email: holly.dublin@iucn.org*

IUCN's mission embraces the inherent values of species, and the goods and services they provide to human development through meeting the needs and aspirations of people. Comprised of

both government and non-governmental members, IUCN provides an unparalleled platform to deal with the highly complex and

often controversial conservation matters of our modern times.

This is clearly demonstrated in IUCN's proposed 2009-2012 programme, which while focusing on conserving biodiversity, is directly concerned with improving livelihoods, reducing vulnerability of the poor, integrating ecosystem values in economic policy and markets, and enhancing environmental and human security through sustainable ecosystem management. As summed up in the 2009-2012 programme document, IUCN "helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges." This holistic approach is implicit in IUCN's involvement in the Dhamra Port intervention.

IUCN has the ability to convene multiple stakeholders, to facilitate dialogue and to bring technical and scientific knowledge to bear in solving complicated conservation issues. It is committed to improving governance and empowering the voices of civil society to help conserve biodiversity, for its own sake and for the contribution it makes to improving human-wellbeing. In the case of Dhamra port, or any other significant development, IUCN interventions are about safeguarding both biological diversity and the needs of people.

IUCN 'One Programme' approach mandates greater engagement with the business sector to realise our conservation agendas. IUCN has a dedicated Business and Biodiversity Programme to oversee relationships with industry, and it goes without saying that these are never simple processes: partnering with any sector, which by its very nature does not have the conservation of biodiversity as its primary objective, makes for practical challenges. But resolutely not engaging with industry makes our task even more difficult and fosters conservation expectations that may be unattainable in reality.

Before IUCN partners with industry on any matter, every effort is made to apply due diligence through background research and dialogue between the three pillars of IUCN – the Secretariat, the Commissions and the Members. Not every approach moves on to become a concrete relationship, and many never make it past the "starting blocks". In the case of our involvement with the Tata Group, IUCN felt it provided an opportunity to bring about more

positive outcomes for marine turtles than might have happened otherwise.

The Species Survival Commission is the largest of IUCN's six Commissions, and it is charged with providing the IUCN and global conservation community with "sound interdisciplinary scientific information", which can influence "decisions and policies affecting biodiversity". The SSC has no executive authority over the work of the IUCN programme, and so providing the necessary information is not as easy or straightforward as it may seem. Fundamentally, the SSC is a loose constellation of experts, that have a passion for species conservation, and who are prepared to assist the SSC gratis – though occasionally specific outputs may be paid for at cost, SSC members are not on the IUCN payroll.

Science and objectivity form the Holy Grail of the SSC. This does not mean consensus will be reached on the scientific evidence underpinning each and every decision, and the dedication and passion of SSC members sometimes conflicts with real world pragmatism. For example, it is not unusual for SSC members of the Sustainable Use Specialist Group to support a level of harvest of a wildlife population opposed by members of a taxonomic Specialist Group, who may well advocate complete protection of the same species. Strong arguments can always be made from both sides. Who is to say what is "right"? Walking the tightrope between strong views held by different conservationists is daily work for the SSC – an often unenviable and difficult operational space, but one that advances conservation in the real world.

The SSC core values, conserving all species and practicing sound science, are what brought us to the table on the Dhamra port issue, and what keeps us there still. The SSC was approached by IUCN's Secretariat, through its Business and Biodiversity and Asia Regional Programmes, to bring our relevant expertise to bear. Through the SSC's Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG), I believe we have delivered sound science related to the port development, in the form of practical and tangible mitigation steps. Our role is not to point fingers, but rather to provide input where we felt it could do the most good given the Dhamra project was already underway. Acting on IUCN's deeply-held philosophy pertaining to development - "do no harm" - we were faced

with a port development that had been approved, was going ahead, and our role was seen as being one of using knowledge and influence to ensure it did the least possible damage to the turtles and their environment.

The Dhamra port situation is one where IUCN's proactive engagement, through its Business and Biodiversity Programme, Asia Regional Programme, the SSC and the MTSG, is aimed at making things better than what they might otherwise have been. We are demonstrably influencing the Dhamra Port Company Ltd to deliver on its conservation promises, through good science, the use of cutting edge technologies and for the betterment of livelihoods of people in the State of Orissa.

Environmental mitigation and the protection of marine turtles are fundamental to the outcomes achieved.

Perhaps the biggest criticism of IUCN's involvement that has been brought to my attention is that we may have fallen short of bringing all concerned parties and individuals along with us in this role. I have been assured that those involved have certainly tried their best to consult, but if some feel they have been left out there is always room for more consultation. Through continued exchange of ideas, and through exploiting opportunities for collective thinking and actions, even greater conservation benefits can be obtained in future.

Dhamra Port: the other perspective*

Amlan Dutta

Environment Manager, Dhamra Port Company Ltd., Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India.

Email: amlan@dhamraport.com

The Dhamra port has been a contentious issue for quite a many years, with a history of mistrust, misconception and hysteria. Perceived to be one of the largest ports in India when complete and one of the few projects actually being implemented in Orissa, without being held up by social upheavals, legal or political encumbrances, this port is actually owned by the state government of Orissa, India, a perception not realized by many dissenters.

The Dhamra Port Company Ltd. is a Special Purpose Vehicle assigned to build own operate and transfer (BOOST) the port to the Orissa government, the ultimate owner. Regardless of the fact that the EIA of the port project has undergone scrutiny by the National Environment Appellate Authority (NEAA), the only judicial body specifically mandated to look into environment clearances, wherein the NEAA has upheld the environment clearance, the port faces constant and directed criticism at various quarters. Its association with IUCN is looked at with derision and cynicism, once again regardless of the fact that this is the first such association of conservation science and Indian industry. Efforts are constantly being made to dissuade IUCN and a particular business house which is one of the promoters, from its

association with DPCL. Some of the criticism has been very personalized against the Chair of this house. Perhaps because of the traditional cynicism of the corporate sector by conservation scientists and conservation workers in India, research and industry have never mingled together due to a history of mistrust.

Conservation research application in managing the protected areas of India has seen few success stories, the best example being the current tiger population in the 29 tiger reserves of the country. Conservation efforts for the olive ridley in Orissa have never been able to stem the 9,000 – 10,000 recorded turtle deaths every year due to trawl fishing, even with judicial interventions, as the conservation approach was fundamentally faulty, possibly because enforcement and conservation need a fine balanced approach, which was never there resulting in the alienation of the trawl fishermen, and a stake for turtle conservation was never felt by the trawl fishermen. Within this background, we have a port being built near turtle habitat; we need to ask ourselves can the port help in turtle conservation in a coordinated effort. Can conservation efforts be directed towards involving all stakeholders in consolidation to bring results?